DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 172 226 CS 204 879

AUTHOR	Crowley, Sharon, Ed.
TITLE	Arizona English Bulletin; Volume 20, Number 3, April 1978. Speech and Drama in the English Class.
INSTITUTION	Arizona English Teachers Association, Tempe.
PUB DATE	Apr 78
NOTE	94p.; The Arizona English Teachers Association is an affiliate of the National Council of Teachers of English; Not available in hard copy due to marginal legibility of original document
AVAILABLE FROM	National Council of Teachers of English, 1111 Kenyon Road, Urbana, Illinois 61801 (Stock No. 46341, $3.50 member, $4.00 non-member)
EDRS PRICE	MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS	*Discussion (Teaching Technique); *Drama; *English Instruction; Group Instruction; Interpretive Reading; Learning Activities; Literature Appreciation; Role Playing; Secondary Education; *Speaking Activities; *Speech Instruction; *Teaching Techniques

ABSTRACT

The 23 articles in this collection suggest practical speech and drama activities for the English classroom. Among the topics discussed are the following: classroom discussion as theatre, using groups for more effective teaching, role playing activities that teach language concepts, improvisation as an instructional method, an oral approach to literature, improving writing through the use of small peer-group discussions, incorporating speech and drama into the English program, pantomime and improvisation as creative dramatics, small group disucssion in the English classroom, transforming "The Scarlet Letter" into a radio play, the oral reading approach in the English survey course, establishing an appropriate climate for role playing, using elements of transactional analysis in speech and drama, establishing a sexual values week, using the overhead projector as a dramatic tool, having students research and give oral reports on individual family histories, teaching speech skills to ninth grade students, and producing adaptations of "Macbeth" with eleventh grade students. (GT)

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Speech and Drama in the English Class

Volume 20 - - - - - - - - Number 3

April, 1978

ARIZONA ENGLISH bulletin

CS 204 879

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The ARIZONA ENGLISH BULLETIN is published three times each year, in October, February, and April. It is supported and subsidized by the Arizona English Teachers Association, Northern Arizona University, the University of Arizona, and Arizona State University. Membership in the Arizona English Teachers Association (including subscription to the ARIZONA ENGLISH BULLETIN) is $5.50 a year (a three-year membership is available for $15). Send application for membership to:

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ARIZONA ENGLISH BULLETIN

APRIL 1978 - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - SPEECH AND DRAMA IN THE ENGLISH CLASS

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LUMPY BODIES NEED LOVE TOO: CLASSROOM DISCUSSION AS THEATRE

Charles Suhor, Deputy Executive Director, NCTE

An interviewer well known for asking clever and embarrassing questions once asked Erma Bombeck why she was ashamed of her body. "Because it's lumpy," was her answer.

Even before my body became lumpy, I was one of the thousands of gangly teachers who don't feel enough body ease to do the creative dramatics thing. Back in the 60's I gamely went to training sessions where we were all supposed to lose our inhibitions by feeling the faces of our co-workers. It didn't take. When I tried to do improvisation games in the classroom, or watched other teachers do them, I always identified with some creepy kid in the corner who just couldn't get with it.

I'm glad that more and more teachers seem to be doing dramatics activities skillfully with students. I believe such activities are theoretically sound and beneficial to students. But I also believe that theorists and practitioners in dramatics have overlooked, or at least underrated, the dramatic dimension in good classroom discussion. Classroom discussion can be a "theatre of the mind," a left hemisphere activity charged with right hemisphere excitement, a cerebral intercourse as involving and intimate as an improvisation session.

The idea that discussion has a theatrical dimension is not new. Many plays don't depict people _behaving_ so much as they depict people _talking_ about their behavior. T. S. Eliot's _The Cocktail Party_ is theatre of the mind. So is Albee's _Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?_.

Talkiness was standard fare in films of the forties and fifties. And Bergman's recent _Scenes from a Marriage_ had some remarkably effective footage of people discussing their inner states. (Admittedly, Bergman created _Scenes from a Marriage_ for television. But the longer TV version was even more ruminative and conversational than the closely edited film, and it was still a gripping dramatic experience.)

Television testifies strongly to the dramatic qualities of discussion. As Jerzy Kosinski has said, we are living in an extraordinary time when people sit in their homes before a television set and watch conversation. The talk show, from Johnny Carson to Tom Snyder to William Buckley, is a form of dramatic discourse that has become a national pastime in America.

I am stretching the terms "drama" and "theatre" here, but not beyond the usual license. All contemporary arts have undergone conscious expansions of definition, usually emphasizing the forms in life over an artificially imposed life of form. _Cinema veritae_ invites chance images and commonplace occurrences to become a part of the film product. Modern music can include street sounds and randomly gathered noises or electronic effects as part of a composition. Sculptures have moving parts that make a visit to the museum an active, participatory experience. Plays often invite or even demand interaction between artists and audiences. In everyday life, we talk facetiously about a meeting or a conversation as "good theatre."

It isn't novel or outrageous, then, to draw a frame around some commonplace experience and view it as an artistic phenomenon. I'll rope off some typical kinds of classroom interaction and consider some of their theatrical dimensions, leading to the conclusion that discussion, as a theatre of the mind, can be a rich and absorbing emotional experience.

The most impoverished kind of discussion, from a dramatic point of view, is the recitation. The format is totally stereotyped, with teacher and students functioning in a wholly predictable manner: teacher asks, student responds. Moreover, the content of the recitation offers a puny dynamic, since the answer is typically right or wrong, and relentlessly close-ended. The main potential for drama in recitation, in fact, comes when several students do not know the answers and the mechanical question-answer process breaks down, to the chagrin of the teacher and the amusement of the students (a classical Bergsonian comic situation).

Socratic discussion is a highly regarded teaching technique, but its dramatic possibilities are limited. Because the teacher typically asks leading questions to move the students toward a predetermined conclusion, there is a mounting tension and a gradual sense of discovery as the argument unfolds. But there is never any doubt about who will provide the revelation--invariably, it is Socrates, the teacher.

Actually, Hitchcock, the teacher. Socratic discussion parallels the compulsive and highly contrived dramatic motion of a whodunit or mystery thriller. Its methods, however ingenious, are always patterned along the lines of convergent, deductive thinking. Participants in this drama are puzzle-solvers, not problem-solvers. They are trying to second-guess the producer's line of thinking, not pose original questions or advance creative solutions. And they can indeed look forward to predictable surprises and dependable conclusions, followed by a tidy denouement in the form of a teacher's sum-up.

Genuine interactive discussion provides the greatest dramatic tension because it involves questions for which no one knows the answers in advance. There is no preset routing for the ideas or formula for solicitation of opinions from members of the class. Ideas are shaped during the interaction itself: A raises a point, B disagrees in part, C contrasts or synthesizes the ideas of A and B, D points to an inference in B's remark, E questions the assumption underlying A's comment, and so on. The discussion has plots and sub-plots that interweave briskly--not with the galling linearity of Socratic discussion, but in a fascinating contrapuntal motion. Since no one has read or written a full scenario in advance, the discussion can be filled with daring verbal episodes, any of which could be the key toward an ultimate understanding, or at least a consensus. The process is improvisational, in the best sense of the word, though not body-oriented.

And yet, good interactive discussion is not merely "interesting." It feels good. I have been in many classrooms where interest and intensity in a discussion were so great that an almost palpable aura of concentration and good feeling hung over the room. And I expect that everyone who has ever been in a heady discussion has sniffed the ambrosial effect of supposedly cerebral interactions.

The range of classroom discussion activities is increasing as new methods for interaction are developed. I've included in the bibliography below some resources that can be helpful in stimulating class discussion in large and small groups. The key to affectively-significant discussions, though, is more in developing a sensibility than a methodology. Discussions should never be thought of merely as alternative ways of conveying information or exchanging ideas. It is necessary to reflect on the emotive content of a classroom discussion, engaging in a kind of biofeedback exercise in which the relevant questions are not just "Did I get the point across?" and "Did the students participate?" but "How did it feel to have these ideas buzzing about the room? What moods were created during the discussion? When the bell rang, did it awaken us from a fascinating trance, or deliver us from a perfunctory routine?

The time is ripe for redeveloping the notion that it is fun to toss ideas around a room. Even lumpy bodies can do mental calisthenics, go spelunking in intellectual caverns, hunt down the thought-fox. Dramatic discussion gives a new application to Gerard Manley Hopkins' words: "The mind, mind has mountains. Hold them cheap [they] many who never hung there."

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USING GROUPS FOR MORE EFFECTIVE TEACHING

Helen Marsh, Southside High School, Muncie, Indiana

The high school English teacher faces a problem shared by most other teachers of content areas. Assured by research findings that student participation in sub-groups can be expected to promote all sorts of good things in English instruction, the average teacher nonetheless has seen few small group patterns in actual practice, either in college English classes or in high schools.

The teacher is a little like Alice, who, wide-eyed and hesitant, said to Humpty Dumpty, "The question is, whether you can make words mean so many different things." Humpty's comment covers a multitude of possibilities: "When I use a word," he says, "it means just what I choose it to mean--neither more nor less." So let it be with group-related activities in the English classroom. It all depends on who is the master, the teacher or the technique.

Stroll down any school corridor and pause at a few classroom doors. What do you hear? The chances are better than even that you will hear someone talking, and that someone, better than seventy percent of the time, will be the teacher. He or she is the classroom manager, clarifier, facilitator, task setter, and evaluator. According to Edmund Amidon and Elizabeth Hunter, authors of Improving Teaching, teacher influence is the strongest single social force in the classroom setting, and I would add, rightly so.

Let us not underestimate the role of the teacher in establishing and maintaining the total intellectual environment of the classroom. Robert B. Zajonc's recent studies on birth order and intelligence sound an important caveat for groups numerically dominated by children: The influence of adult-level minds is diluted by the number of child-sized minds influencing the total group. His studies of family size and birth order in relation to intelligence show that a child's average intellectual environment depends on the number of his family members and their relative ages. Zajonc's correlations link the current decline in intellectual ability of American youth to the postwar growth in family size and the students' later birth orders. The larger the family group, the lower the overall level of functioning. He concluded that children who grew up surrounded by people of higher intellectual development have a better chance to reach maximum intellectual levels than do children who mature in the child-oriented intellectual millieu of a large family.

We are not, therefore, suggesting that the teacher of a numerically youth-dominated classroom abdicate adult-level intellectual input and face the class with a sunny, if insipid, "Well, students, what shall we do today?" Zajonc's observations, while centered on family structure, reaffirm the fact that competent adult intellectual structure and content in the classroom are vital.

However, Ned Flanders' research into teacher influence establishes convincingly the conclusion that students who achieve most and have the most positively-revised attitudes are those who are exposed to flexible patterns of teacher influence. In Analyzing Teacher Behavior he reported that flexibility included periods of direct influence which restricted freedom of action, focused on a problem, imposed teacher authority, or all of these; however, it had a higher overall average of indirect influence during which the teacher encouraged student freedom of action, participation, and initiative. Students whose teachers showed high direct influence--lecturing, directing, criticizing, justifying use of authority--actually showed consistently less achievement. Flanders concludes that the differences between direct and indirect teachers may lie in the number of different roles the teacher is able to play in the classroom. An adept teacher can shift readily from one role to another and yet remain consistent with empirically-researched learning modes. Unhappily, having such information does not always generate a corresponding skill in one of the finest tools for indirect flexibility--small group interaction toward completing a task.

The teacher's role in facilitating effective group activities is to set up the stimulus complex and instruct the students on what they are to do and what goal is to be achieved. In a well-conceived group design, the students themselves should create or select alternative routes or contents toward task fulfillment. Some global tasks will involve decisions where no externally correct solutions exist; here, the successful completion of the activity depends on its acceptance by the group and/or the teacher.

Students in groups can be expected to function quite effectively when their activities draw upon research-based assumptions about group process. The following empirically-tested principles with illustrative English activities offer both students and teachers flexible alternatives.

ASSUMPTION 1: The presence of other students can be expected to increase the motivation of the performing individual.[1]

As an activity in vocabulary building, several student groups of three each may select a challenging word from their reading or a prepared list. They should then look up meaning, pronunciation, derivation, and common sentence usage, and one writes these facts on a card for reference. All three assist one another in fabricating two more complete sets of fictitious "facts" about the word. The students then attempt to "sell" their versions of the word meanings to a listening group of panelists, each speaker vying with the others in vividness of detail and authenticity of usage. If the listeners miss the correct meaning entirely, the speakers win three points; one incorrect choice equals one point; two, two points. When one group concludes, another continues until the vocabulary list is complete. Students of limited imagination sometimes find such improvisation difficult; however, the situation is largely non-threatening, because each student has help with definitions and motivation to be convincing before peers.

ASSUMPTION 2: Group judgments are superior to individual judgments on tasks that can be constructed from a number of judgments drawing on the greater knowledge of the group.[2]

Assume, for the moment, that the unit under study is one in which concepts need exemplification: e.g., heroes and anti-heroes, stereotypes of men/women in literature, or types of advertising appeals. Class discussion should delineate, for example, what the culture values in its heroes and heroines. The list of heroes might include divergent types: strong men and warriors (Achilles, General Douglas MacArthur, Superman), Christ figures (the Puritans, Albert Schweitzer), lovers (Don Juan, Romeo), intellectuals (Plato, Einstein, Henry

Kissinger), and so on. The conflict inherent in valuing both a warrior and a Christ figure at the same time may well lead into the phenomenon of the anti-hero. The role of the heroine in life and in literature may be developed in like manner.

Once a class has become interested, a logical group outgrowth is a survey of popular heroes and heroines. Each student may record the choice of ten respondents for a hero and heroine, living or dead, real or fictional. To insure a balanced sample, the ten respondents should include two children, two teenagers, four adults, and two people over fifty-five; and five males and five females. A student chairman may tally the survey results. The class should then process their insights into current values as revealed in the findings.

A recent survey of this type by Family Weekly, asking for both a hero and a heroine, produced a fine diversity of choices including many women. The first time my classes used this technique, they called for a hero OR heroine; findings were that choices were overwhelmingly male, usually white unless the respondent was non-white, and centered around sports figures, music stars and the President. Interestingly, small children often chose cartoon characters. A non-sexist approach should certainly call for both heroes and heroines, though the either/or option surely made its point. The class followed through by appointing a class reporter to write up a feature on their group judgments for the school newspaper.

ASSUMPTION 3: Groups learn faster than individuals, a finding the support for which appears to be universally positive.[3]

Thorough review of a unit through gaming can be a fast-paced, commotion-filled, but profitable group activity.

In picture charades, each student scans an assigned portion of the review material for names of characters, stories, landmarks, identifying features and the like. Slips of paper bearing these clues are placed in a bowl at the teacher's desk. The class is divided into five-member groups, each of which sends one representative forward. One clue is drawn and shown to all the representatives at once, the teacher making certain that each recognizes the name. At a signal, the representatives return to their groups and begin to draw pictures of the concept. For example, one group identified Benjamin Franklin in ten seconds. The clue? A kite, string, and key, as featured in one of their literature selections.

Another group review game is Jeopardy, played much like the television game. The teacher designates five categories for questions based on unit themes: a course in folklore might include as themes, lovers, ghosts, rascals, animal stories, and underdogs who win. Students write $10, $20, $30, $40, and $50 questions for each category and place their slips in the proper column. As each turn to play arrives, the student chooses a category and price level, just as the television contestant does. Students like to play this review game for extra credit, and even those who do not care to play learn from the enthusiasm of the group.

ASSUMPTION 4: New and radical ideas are produced when criticism is suspended during brainstorming periods, whether under group or individual conditions.[4]

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Brainstorming is a good primer for creativity in the classroom. Ground rules are few. No idea is too far out to be included, and no one is to criticize or reject any idea while brainstorming is underway. Students may work in small groups at their desks or as a whole class with a recorder at the chalkboard; types of stimuli with which to start the process may vary.

One successful brainstorming session produced a series of "Mythological Graffiti" which was finally assembled on a panel of colored art paper on the classroom door. The display continued to attract attention and contributions long after the initial exercise was over. The following is a partial list of such graffiti:

Hippolyta was a women's libber.
Aurora was a light sleeper.
The Three Sisters never did see eye to eye.
Mercury travels by T. W. A. these days.
Pluto looks as if he'd seen a ghost.
Echo always has the last word.
Prometheus eats out each day.
Medusa's friends were really stoned.
Sisyphus had his ups and downs.
The Minotaur was bull headed.

Another successful stimulus toward creative ideas for a writing class proved to be defining a general, abstract term like "frustration" in concrete terms: e.g., "Frustration is turning on the T.V. and finding your favorite program has been preempted by the President."

Whatever the stimulus, the purpose of brainstorming is to produce new connections between ideas.

ASSUMPTION 5: Decisions made through the group's action produce a greater conformity to group standards than do similar presentations of ideas given to individuals.[5]

Students can be taught, using group activities, to recognize flashbacks, frames, and purposive distortions of time in short stories, and from these, to carry over varying non-sequential time orders to their own narratives.

This activity begins with the reading of a short story that uses some form of reordered time sequence. Katherine Anne Porter's "The Jilting of Granny Weatherall" is a sophisticated time distortion of a dying old woman's life as it flashes before her illness-glazed eyes. William Faulkner's stories also employ complicated time treatments, e.g., time as seen by the idiot Benjy in Book I of The Sound and the Fury.

Any story with a non-sequential time order is appropriate to this activity. To illustrate, a set of events from the story "The Jilting of Granny Weatherall" may be compiled by students or teacher similar to the following:

Statements about the story	Right	Wrong	Don't Know
2. The person fishing for trout was a man.	R	W	DK
3. The man who showed his fishing license was the trout fishing enthusiast.	R	W	DK
4. The game warden demanded to see the fishing license.	R	W	DK
5. Someone demanded the license after the trout fishing enthusiast had pulled in the fish.	R	W	DK
6. Only three people are mentioned in this story: the trout fishing enthusiast, the fish and game warden, and the highway patrolman.	R	W	DK
7. The game warden left angrily.	R	W	DK
8. Someone produced a license.	R	W	DK
9. The gamesman had a fishing license and should not have had his fish taken.	R	W	DK
10. The patrolman was angry about the incident.	R	W	DK

The teacher then announces the correct answers: #5 and #8 are right; #10 is wrong; all others cannot be determined from the selection.

With the results of the quiz to guide them, teacher and students should discuss assumptions that lead one to make connections that are not necessarily there. Ambiguity becomes dramatic when individuals have reached consensus with colleagues, and both find themselves misled.

ASSUMPTION 7: The more dependable group member is likely to emerge as the group leader, and his or her ability will help the group to complete its goals successfully.[7]

Individual members significantly affect small group characteristics. Group function is enhanced by cooperativeness, efficiency and insight; it is depressed by suspicion, non-acceptance and self-serving attitudes. The dependable person proves to be the more popular with and attractive to others in the group, all of which has significant consequences for group process.

Let's assume that a phase elective course in science fiction has engendered discussion on the problems of a futuristic society like the domed cities of the movie Logan's Run or Philip Wylie's play LA 2017, set in enormous caves. Some of the following topics may be worth exploring:

- Necessity for and means of accomplishing population control
- Government by an elite corps of controllers for the people's own good
- The political position of an opposition
- Thought control and freedom of expression
- The corporate or police image and function in a tightly controlled society
- Tests of who is fit to survive and the morality of these decisions

Teaching students how to develop a full thesis with pro and con arguments may be accomplished by helping them formulate thesis sentences from these topics and then breaking down the controversy into manageable segments and having students pool their ideas and information for a panel discussion or debate.

Groups of four to six students first choose a topic drawn from the play or movie. They then write a thesis statement which is equally defensible from the pro or con viewpoint, the statement to be checked by the teacher for workability. The total group then divides itself equally into the two viewpoints, thereafter to work separately on developing outlines of supporting points for their positions. It is important to provide at least two student leaders capable of chairing the analysis and presentation of the two diverse positions. The writing of outlines for each presentation should be followed by oral rehearsals in small groups of each student's speech; by this time, arguments will likely have become top secrets.

The final presentation may take the form of a debate or panel discussion, the sequence and groundrules for which should be provided by the teacher on dittoed sheets. Video taping of the sequence provides students with feedback on how they function, or they may conduct an oral presentation in the classroom.

In either case, the two forms of group feedback suggested are as follows: The first concerns the group giving the presentation. Members should be asked to write individual notes stating what they contributed to the undertaking and their perceptions of the contributions of two immediate colleagues on the panel. This feedback should alert the teacher to interaction patterns within the group. The second type of feedback concerns those listening to the oral presentations; this instrument should be filled out by one designated listening group, to be made available to the performing group as a student evaluation of their presentation. Peer reaction should reinforce those student leaders who helped pull the activity together.

Evaluation Form

Evaluator's name______________________________ Group Number______________

Panel Topic____

What thesis is being proved?____

How well did the first speaker's contributions unite the subsequent discussion?
Effectively 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Ineffectively

How well did this group fulfill the aim of supporting opposing sides of a thesis through logical presentation of facts?
Very well 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Poorly

How well were individual contributions coordinated?
Poorly 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Very well

The following criteria apply to each individual speaker: (Include enough blanks to serve four to six speakers).

Speaker 1

Orally effective	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Orally ineffective
Argument illogical	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Argument logical
Effective supporting facts	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Ineffective supporting facts
Good response to conflicting ideas	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Weak response to conflicting ideas

ASSUMPTION 8: The interaction required for group judgment and problem solving contributes something to group outcomes that is greater than the sum of individual contributions.[8]

The following group writing design was originally set up to encourage students to respond to a famous portrait, "Mrs. Willoughby," in terms of the students' own perceptions of its artistry. The dynamics of the four students who were working on the same picture, however, fundamentally changed the results of the assignment as the instructor had envisioned them.

Students were originally asked to study and describe the physical appearance of the subject, Mrs. Willoughby, then to project the mood, conflicts, values, or personal situation suggested by the picture. Student analyses, four or five to each picture, were then to be tape recorded and played for the entire class as one continuous reaction to the picture. What actually evolved was a correlation of several monolgues: one girl spoke as Mrs. Willoughby herself, followed by a boy as Mrs. Willoughby's hen-pecked husband; the black-sheep daughter and approving pastor completed the quartet. This innovative amalgam of the original assignment to analyze a portrait gave a multidimensional impression of Mrs. Willoughby that exceeded anything any single student could have contributed and, indeed, became more than the assignment presaged.

Our trip Through the Looking Glass with Humpty and Alice has aimed at a special kind of classroom experience, that of the subtle, often dynamic realm of group interaction. Group techniques offer the teacher a new dimension in flexibility and effectiveness--inexpensive, ever available, and sanctioned by empirical research findings. The idea is worth a try.

NOTES

1. Marvin E. Shaw, Group Dynamics: The Psychology of Small Group Behavior (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1971), p. 80.

2. Kate Gordon, "Group Judgments in the Field of Lifted Weights, Journal of Experimental Psychology, 7 (1924), 398-400.

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A PEARL IN THE HAM IS WORTH TWO IN THE BOOK

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Speech and dramatic activities in the English classroom seem to go naturally with the study of literature. Taking parts in plays, oral interpretation of poetry, dramatization of fiction, and choral reading are often used effectively to enhance literature. If a teacher and a class are more ambitious, they can stage Readers' Theater productions, full-length plays, or simulations--such as the trial of Brutus for the murder of Caesar, complete with judge, jury, attorneys, witnesses, and reporters.

The uses of speech and drama may be less obvious in relation to language and composition, but in these areas too they can help develop and reinforce important concepts. Following are some outlined suggestions for serving educational purposes by taking advantage of students' love for theatrics.

I. Concept: male and female language[1]

Activity: role-playing

A. Choose 3 boys and 3 girls; have them leave the room. Give each couple a situation to act out when they return and a few props to help suggest it. Examples:

1. A husband returns home, carrying a briefcase. His wife is cooking, with a pan and spoon. He tells her about his day; she complains about the children.

2. A woman goes into a service station with a map to ask for directions. A male mechanic with a screwdriver gives them to her.

3. A male doctor, holding a golf club, dictates a letter to his female secretary before leaving for the country club.

B. After each improvisation, reverse the roles:

1. Wfie returns home with briefcase; husband is cooking.

2. Man asks female mechanic for directions.

3. Woman doctor dictates letter to her male secretary.

C. Have the class observe both the verbal and body language used in each situation. Where differences are observed, how much do they depend on the situation and how much on the sex of the participants?

II. Concept: pidgin language

Activity: role-playing

A. Choose 3 students to be shipwreck survivors. Have them leave the room. They are to make up a language of 25 words or less.

B. When the survivors return (are cast up on an island), they are to use this language to try to communicate with the other class members (inhabitants of the island).

C. Before the survivors return, tell the class to be deliberately obtuse and to pretend not to understand the survivors' language. Have them observe especially the body language and gestures used as difficulty of communication increases.

D. After the role-playing, discuss the following:

1. How well did the class understand the new language? They will probably be able to remember and define many of the words in it. What helped them do this?

2. How did the survivors proceed in inventing their language? Why did they choose the words they did? The discussion will probably elicit these facts:

    a. Their sentences were structured like English sentences.
    b. They omitted many function words, since they were limited to a vocabulary of 25 words.
    c. Their combinations were original, but the sounds they used were all common to English.

E. Relate the results of this activity to the facts about pidgin languages:[2]

1. They are invented, being nobody's native tongue.

2. They come into being when speakers of several different languages need a medium for elementary communication.

3. They use the structure of one language as a basis, borrowing vocabulary from one or more others.

4. Their grammar is simpler than that of natural languages.

III. Concept: evaluation of student writing

Activity: role-playing

A. Choose 2 groups of 3 or 4 students each. Give each group copies of the same actual student paper (not that of any student in the class), assigning the writer of it a fictitious name, such as Joe.

B. Give each group written directions for analyzing Joe's paper, as follows:

1. Tell Group 1 that they are psychologists, trying to find out about Joe through his writing. On the basis of this paper, they are to try to answer the following questions:

   a. What is Joe's personality?
   b. What are his values and attitudes?
   c. How far has his language development progressed? What written structures has he mastered? What structures are still giving him problems? How well is he able to organize his ideas and develop them with examples? How well can he handle the conventions of punctuation, capitalization?
   d. How good is his paper? What grade would you suggest for it?

2. Tell Group 2 that they are English teachers evaluating Joe's writing with the purpose of deciding what English class he belongs in. Have them answer the following questions:

   a. What specific faults in his writing will need to be worked on? How good is his organization, development, sentence structure, use of mechanics?
   b. What grade does this paper deserve?

C. Have each group report and compare results. Their perceptions will probably differ considerably, Group 1 being more favorably disposed toward both Joe and his writing than Group 2. The suggested grades will probably differ by at least 1 grade point. Inferences that can be drawn from this activity should stimulate a provocative discussion about teachers' attitudes.

IV. Concept: evaluation of student writing

Activity: role-playing

A. Give 2 students the same student paper to study (not that of anyone in the class).

B. Have one student role-play as the writer of the paper, the other as a teacher. They are to hold a conference in which the teacher tries to point out the student's writing problems and errors that need correction. The student is to resist the teacher's advice, maintaining that the paper is understandable ("You know what I meant."), that the errors are trivial, and so on. The rest of the class should have copies, or the paper should be projected on an overhead projector, so that they can follow the discussion.

C. After the role-playing, have the class discuss the conference, criticize the attitudes of both participants, and suggest ways of improving the situation.

V. Concept: regional dialect pronunciation[3]

Activities: writing, speaking, and listening

A. Choose several words (5-10, depending on the class's writing ability) that are pronounced differently in various regions of the country. Examples: dog, father, marry, orange, wrist, water, ceremony, both, either, car, greasy, park, hired.

B. Have each student write a paragraph, story, or poem, using 5 or more of these words, and read it aloud while the others listen and observe differences in pronunciation of the key words. Better yet, tape record the readings, and use each class's with another class in order to promote more objectivity.

C. Have the class discuss differences observed. Is any one pronunciation "right" and the others "wrong"? Which regional dialects have high prestige (Boston, southern)? Which have low prestige (Oklahoma, Brooklyn)? Why? Is this fair? Is prestige only in the ear of the listener?

VI. Concepts: paralanguage (suprasegmentals),[4] organization, style, mechanics

Activities: listening, transcribing, analyzing

A. Tape record, or have students tape record, several short selections from radio or TV on similar subjects. Examples:

1. Sports reporters--Howard Cosell, Cathy Rigby, Heywood Hale Broun
2. Animal shows--Wild Kingdom; Wild, Wild World of Animals
3. Sermons--Catholic, Protestant, Jewish
4. News commentators--Barbara Walters, David Brinkley, Walter Cronkite, Howard K. Smith
5. Local weather reports

B. Play the selections and ask students to notice the sound patterns used by the speakers: pitch, stress, juncture, rate of speed, regional dialect pronunciation, etc. They will probably notice that some speakers rely largely on pitch and stress for emphasis, while others use long pauses for the same purpose. They may also notice some characteristic verbal features of each speaker's style, but these can be better analyzed if a transcription is made.

C. Have students transcribe short sections of the tape. They will soon discover that, even with the most attentive listening, some words will be difficult or impossible to catch exactly. (Using a good reel-to-reel tape recording will make this task much easier.) This activity illustrates the fact that redundancy in language is frequent and necessary. Listeners don't pick up every syllable of every word; we hear words in context and supply what we don't hear from our knowledge of the grammatical structure of the language.

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D. Have students punctuate their transcriptions as accurately as possible. Since not even the teacher will know the "right" punctuation, discussion of different possibilities can reinforce understanding of principles, rather than just rules.

E. Reproduce some of the transcriptions and study them for stylistic features, such as the following:

   1. Level of diction--how many words are everyday; how many are learned?

   2. Use of contractions and slang to establish colloquial tone.

   3. Repetition--of words, phrases, grammatical patterns.

   4. Use of figures of speech--how many are original; how many are cliches?

   5. Length and structure of sentences--how often do they begin with something other than the subject, for instance?

VII. Concept: "back-to-basics" or "standards in English" or "good English"

Activity: panel discussion

A. Give each panel member a role to play: school board member, parent, teenager, employer, English teacher, college professor, etc.

B. Have each panel member do research on the question by reading, discussions, and interviews with members of the community.

C. Ask panel members to present their prepared statements, debate them with the other panelists, and then try to answer questions from the floor. The other students can role-play as students, parents, administrators, and members of the community.

VIII. Concept: the power of names

Activity: simulation[5]

A. Present a situation, such as the following: a group of 3 or 4 teachers have written a textbook, which deals with many areas of language study besides grammar and usage: semantics, rhetoric, dialect study, etymology, names, levels of diction. They have taken all their examples and exercises from the mass media and other everyday uses of language, such as doctor-patient language, slang, junk mail, classroom language, personal letters. Their rationale is that language study should be directly related to the everyday uses of language, rather than made-up examples like those in conventional textbooks.[6] The authors have had their manuscript accepted by a publishing company, and now a name needs to be chosen for the book.

B. A number of activities can be organized around this situation. Examples:

1. A conference between the authors and the publishers, in which a number of possibilities are discussed, with reasons for each.

2. Interviews of students and teachers to try to determine the kind of name that would appeal to each group.

3. A book jacket, using the name finally chosen, illustrated by an appropriate design, and incorporating biographical notes about the authors, quotations from reviews, and the usual publisher's blurb about the book.

4. A letter to be sent to teachers and school districts, urging them to order the book, and giving reasons why it is superior to other texts on the market.

IX. Concept: accountability

Activity: simulation

A. Present the following situation: a student sues the school board because he or she has been graduated from high school but can't read and write well enough to get or keep a job.

B. Several activities can be organized around this situation. Examples:

1. An informal discussion by the graduate, the parents, the school principal, and several teachers.

2. A news broadcast.

3. A documentary on the subject for radio or TV.

4. A discussion among several consultants called in to give their opinions--a college director of Freshman English, a reading specialist, an employer in the community, a school board member, the superintendent of schools.

5. An open school board hearing to discuss the question and assess public opinion.

6. A speech by a candidate for school board, exploiting this issue.

7. A trial of the case, with students role-playing as attorneys, judge, jury, etc.

These suggestions are admittedly sketchy, but teachers will be able to expand upon them and adapt them to their own classroom situations. Below is a list of books I've found helpful as background for some of the concepts discussed.

NOTES

1. This was a demonstration lesson by one of my students, Alice Lee.

2., 3., 4. See the Bibliography for background material on this subject.

5. See the Bibliography for information on designing and using simulations.

6. The writer of this article is working on just such a textbook with three other persons, and would welcome any suggestions for a name that grows out of this activity.

. . . .

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IMPROVIZATION AS AN INSTRUCTIONAL METHOD

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Teachers of almost all subject areas in the elementary school, as well as many secondary teachers, have been making increased use of dramatization as a teaching technique. Although dramatic presentations such as pageants or plays have been an established school activity since the latter part of the nineteenth century, the thrust to use drama as an instructional strategy is a relatively recent innovation. Rooted in the creative dramatics movement of the 1940s and 1950s[1] and more recently in the subjective approach for actor training, loosely labeled "method" acting,[2] the approach differs from traditional school drama in two major respects: 1) the young actors create their own dialogue and action, rather than working from pre-written scripts; and 2) most of the activity is never intended for performance before an audience, other than classmates.

Some overlapping use of terms occurs, although this is not of serious concern. For the purpose of this paper, creative drama or creative dramatics will be thought of as a broad designation that can encompass both the extemporized scene and the more perfected scene which may be practiced, rehearsed, and refined for production. Also, creative dramatics is the label more closely associated with elementary school activity. As the concern here is primarily with the secondary classroom and is without any public performance component, the terms role playing and improvization more accurately describe the activity.

Role playing may include both the taking on of another part or character, such as the student's portrayal of a principal or teacher, or it may simply mean portraying one's self at another time or place. A student who creates a classroom scene in which he arrives at home in the afternoon to confront his mother and little brother is role playing, for he portrays himself under surroundings that differ from those he is actually in.

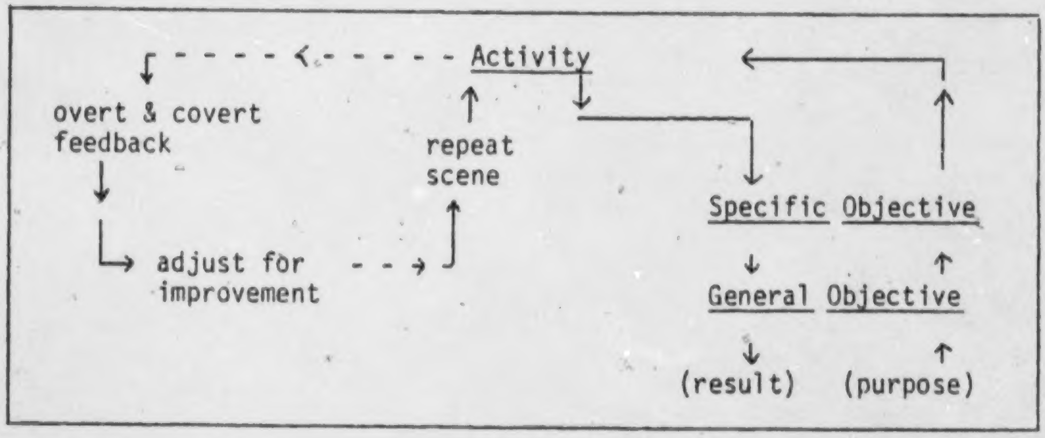
Improvization means the extemporaneous act of creating dialogue and plot development without a pre-written script. Central ideas and themes are specified in advance, but how they will be developed and what will be said is left to the spontaneity of the moment.

As with any new instructional strategy, teachers must guard against misuse or ineffective use of the system. Many teachers with only passing knowledge of the value of using role playing and improvization in the classroom, who are nonetheless intrigued by the imaginative possibilities, have fallen short of the full potential through inadequate structuring of the activities. In some classrooms, students are doing little more than half-hearted games of charades--a simple pantomime, accompanied by a few words, and let the class guess what is going on! Charades is a fun game and one in which students can learn something about concentration and careful use of the body, face, and hands to express ideas. But as a game, it falls far short of the linguistic skills development that should occur with a well-planned series of improvizations.

Two general guidelines can help the teacher avoid the game-for-games-sake or time filler function that often seems to be the only identifiable purpose of classroom dramatization. First, a purpose or reason must exist for all improvisations, some motivation that underlies the mere giving of a situation to act out. And second, all improvizations must be followed by careful feedback and evaluation from the teacher, the performers, and other students in the class. After feedback, students need to repeat and perfect the scene, with a goal of constant improvement.

Goal or purpose should exist on three levels. The broad-based, underlying, or general objective is often a long-range, humanistic aim that cannot be measured precisely. A statement such as "the improvement of cognitive and linguistic skills" would fall in this category. The specific objective limits the area of skill to be perfected to an easily identifiable behavior or performance. Finally, the activity or scene that will be created to help achieve that goal should be specified. Students may not always be made aware of the general objective, for a common goal may underlie many exercises or even be the teacher's motivational framework for a full semester's work. But students should always understand the specific objective, and follow-up feedback should be directed toward a discussion of the success in meeting that objective, given a range of alternate possibilities.

A model may be suggested for using an improvizational approach:



An example can aid in clarifying the model. A teacher may select as a general objective for a unit of work the goal of "improving interpersonal communication skills in the business world." Of the several specific objectives to be achieved during the unit, one might be "students should be able to make a complaint successfully in a role playing situation." An activity could be designed in which three students create a scene in a store--one portraying a clerk, one a department manager, and the third a customer. The situation would be that the customer has bought a radio that is defective and wants to return it. The scene or scenes would then explore alternate ways the dialogue might progress.

Following the first effort, discussion would provide overt feedback from the teacher and other students on ways in which the scene might be improved and alternate approaches to the communication that might be more effective in fulfilling the objective. Covert feedback occurs within the student performers as they self-evaluate as a result of having been through the experience. The scene may be redone, incorporating ideas from the discussion, one or more times, until the desired result is achieved. In some instances, other students might play the same roles to gain a different perspective on the scene.

Feedback sessions should be guided by the teacher, especially during the beginning of a series of exercises, to insure constructive comments of sufficient depth to be of real value. The teacher should not, however, dominate the discussion period, for the student's ability to evaluate the performances of others is a key ingredient in his own self-improvement. Discussion should center on the completeness of the scene, as well as the success in achieving the assigned specific objective. Scene completeness can be analyzed by the traditional dramatic subdivisions of plot, character, dialogue, and action. But a more workable framework for the adolescent may be the journalistic "five W's"--who, what, where, when, and why--coupled with a simple structural division into beginning, middle, and end.

I have had the opportunity to observe a number of teachers using improvization as a teaching technique. Most were combining work in English, Speech, and Drama. Their successes with role playing have ranged from outright failures to a measurable and exciting level of student growth. A summary of one such success will serve to illustrate the technique.

Within the first week of the semester, the teacher had discovered from both a written and an oral assignment that one of her eleventh grade classes was a collection of woefully inarticulate students. The problem seemed not so much related to skills in grammar, syntax, or spelling, but a weakness in the development and elaboration of ideas. Her queries about details, description, explanation, or motivation--any of the critical requirements for clear and interesting oral and written communication--brought only puzzled, "I dunno's." The teacher had her general objective.

Adopting the five W's approach, she began daily classroom improvization, working slowly with a week to ten days spent on each concept. The first week was devoted to *who*, with a number of specific scenes designed simply to recognize aspects and characteristics of different people. The first two days were solely physical--different ways of walking, sitting, standing, or using the hands. A variety of words for the different physical activities were introduced. Well-known television characters were imitated, and students were alerted to observe family members and friends. Gradually dialogue was introduced. The first efforts were painful--a few mumbled words, accompanied by out-of-character, self-conscious giggling and guffawing.

Where was the second concept, for a sense of place is easier to establish than the motivational area of *why*. *Who* remained important to each scene, as the students explored changes in characters as they moved from one place to another. Written homework assignments called for description of students' rooms at home and how feelings changed in one's own room from other rooms in the house.

By the third week, discussion and feedback, almost nonexistent in the beginning, was developing into a voluntary activity, with students growing anxious to make comments such as, "I don't think you'd walk that way in a church," or "You sure sit sloppy to be in the principal's office." Some actual dialogue between students as to the most effective way of expressing an idea or revealing a character began to emerge.

When followed *who* and *where* easily, although it did not offer as many alternatives nor prove as easy to communicate in the scene. *What* was grasped quickly, for students had already discovered for themselves that some sort of action or conflict was needed to create an interesting scene. And finally, *why* opened the whole realm of motivation and intent, and gave real meaning to the scenes.

The total process took about eight weeks of class time. Short, outside written assignments reinforced each concept. Classroom improvization, or "improvs" as the students grew fond of calling them, had grown from less than a minute awkward mutterings into 5 to 7 minute clearly defined situations with identifiable, motivated characters. In the beginning all ideas for scenes had been furnished by the teacher, usually written on note cards or small slips of paper. By the end of the two months, students were freely making many suggestions of their own, and working out details of the five W's from a beginning suggestion. Both quantity and quality of the feedback and class discussion had increased dramatically. Any student who failed to think and plan his five W's carefully would be called to task by a discriminating classmate. Yet the critique periods were never hostile, but were characterized by a genuine desire to do the best scenes possible.

As a final segment, a unit focusing on beginnings, middles, and endings was added, giving a sense of structural fitness to the improvs. By the end of the semester, this particular class had made significant progress in expressing and elaborating thoughts and ideas, both in writing and orally.

Combining the improvizational technique with the step-by-step conceptual focal pointing worked well in this case, for it met the needs of a specific group of students, it had a clearly identifiable goal sturcture, and it offered a high level of classroom involvement in the learning process. With the teacher's skill and care in planning, executing, and evaluating, role playing as an instructional method has a vast potential for improving all language skills.

NOTES

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LIVING LITERATURE - An Oral Approach to Literature

Joan Steen Silberschlag, Central High School, Phoenix

WHO: A teacher of English

WHAT: LIVING LITERATURE
READERS THEATRE
THEATRE OF THE MIND
INTERPRETERS THEATRE
THEATRE OF THE IMAGINATION
CONCERT READING
MULTIPLE READING
STAGED READING
CHAMBER THEATRE
GROUP READING

Whatever you name it, this type of group activity is a most unique experience.

WHERE: A classroom

WHEN: Immediately

WHY: To vitalize the study of literature and have the students see the printed page come to life.

HOW: A literature book, students and ENTHUSIASM!

Put zest and vitality in your teaching by introducting an oral approach to literature to your classes. "A sound curriculum in literature must provide experience in the reading of literature and in oral interpretation . . . a sound program in composition must embrace oral as well as written composition; a sound program in language must deal with oral as well as written language." (Squire and Applebee, 1968 National Study of High School English Program)

The Living Literature or Readers Theatre method provides an opportunity to experience literature as a group activity through the oral interpretation approach (the theatre does not belong to the reader; therefore, "readers" is not used in the possessive form).[1] It is a teaching technique needed to enhance English classes and will help to stimulate students not only to analyze a text but experience it. Readers Theatre provides opportunities for creative thinking, reading skills practice, training for oral and body expression, development of confidence, poise and fostering a sense of teamwork toward a shared goal.

For the past fifteen years, I have used the oral approach to literature in my classes and eagerly endorse this method for students of all levels of academic ability. Ten years ago, when I attended the NCTE Convention in Honolulu, many sessions were devoted to urging English teachers to use the dramatic approach in teaching literature. John Dixon, Growth Through English: A Report

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Based on the Dartmouth Seminar, 1966, recommends "drama" by which he means "doing, acting things out rather than working on them in abstract and in private." Dixon tells teachers that it is "the truest form of learning, for it puts knowledge and understanding to their test in action." I realized that in the messages of the clinicians was a device that I had been successfully incorporating in my classes.

It is not necessary to have a background in speech or drama to practice this intriguing method of studying literature. First, start with the text, generate enthusiasm and you will find students eager to perform and share a story with the class. If you have been trying to think of a way to stimulate and motivate students to take an active role in the reading and discussion of a story, poem or novel, the key to a successful activity approach is Readers Theatre. Students get involved with the literature by orally and physically performing and they experience the selection more deeply than they would in silent reading. No longer will some students be passive recipients of the subject matter, because they will become active members in the learning process. Emphasis should be placed on the *process*, not the performance of the student readers. Grouping, discussion, analysis, word study, character delineation, seeking underlying truths and rehearsing are all a necessary part of the preparation for reading aloud. The process will help stimulate students not only to analyze a text but to *experience* it. In the shared reading aloud, the students are led to see that the better constructed the story or novel, the more believable are its characters.

Some teachers reject the oral approach because they feel it is too time-consuming. Granted, the process takes more time than the "let's read silently and discuss" procedure or the "teacher-lecture-student-takes-notes" approach. Time is well spent when students who hear the material read aloud or who prepare it for reading aloud, derive additional knowledge and pleasure from the literature, whether it be prose or poetry. Teachers who have used this method have discovered that the oral approach contributes to better reading comprehension, helps develop better voices and articulation and makes the study of literature a meaningful, exciting experience for the student because he is in direct contact with the literature. Students begin to think creatively and strengthen their imaginations. They read orally in such a way that self-confidence and poise are developed and they improve the ability to listen.

Slower students feel strongly motivated because they discover that ensemble reading is fun and exciting and when they have fun, they have a feeling of success. Oral reading then becomes the act of making the black marks on the page come to life and the characters come alive. Every time the student speaks the literature, he knows more about it, and an enriching by-product is the student's insights into his own personality. As a member of the audience, the student's listening skills are sharpened because he must visualize the scene, pick up the cues and signals from the reader and must tell the story to himself.

Getting launched takes a certain amount of organization and after initial decisions as to what stories or poems the class will present, the students begin their preparation in the project. Not all stories are appropriate for the oral approach; those that have more dialogue than narrative will be more appealing to the ear. Readers Theatre fits into curriculum in a flexible way, and there is no one way of utilizing this approach, since the success depends on the ability, personality, sophistication of your class, materials and reading level.

Let me share one approach that I use for the "living literature" activity. The class is divided into groups of five and each group is responsible for a story in our text, certain poems or several chapters in a novel. If we start with the short story, the members of the group are considered the "experts" and are responsible for teaching the class everything about that literary selection. As a group and in class, they read the story aloud, decide what members will take the narrative passages (narrators) and what members will play specific characters. The reluctant reader may volunteer to do sound-effects, musical bridges, select pictures or slides for projection, in addition to reading a minor role. Each student in the group has an active part and each one must participate in the oral reading. It is advised that the strongest readers take the role of the narrators as they usually have the ability to pace the reading of the selection.

After the reading through of the story, the compilation of the script is necessary. For classroom purpose and not public performance, encourage the use of the complete text. The adapters must be true to the text and the policy of ethical commitment is discussed with the class. Do not permit them to delete passages, change the dialogue or paraphrase the story. The "he said" may or may not be deleted. The performance flows when the student speaks the lines of the character instead of saying "he said" either before or after the dialogue. Depending on the ability of your class, you may want to adapt some scripts to get the students involved in the oral performance of literature. The bibliography lists several books that have scripts cut for twenty to thirty minute presentations that will introduce materials not in the student's text.

I prefer to have students work on the adaptation as a group project. Do not permit them to assign to an ambitious student the compilation of the script because this is an important group decision-making exercise. Discussion of the adaptation is a valuable exercise in analyzing and evaluating the selection, and will insure complete understanding of the material to be read by exploring both its intrinsic and extrinsic aspects. This work should be done during classtime so the instructor can give assistance and encouragement with the adaptation. After the story has been adapted, encourage students to begin specific analysis with a study of the persona (speaker) and His dramatic situation (who is speaking, to whom, where, when and why). K. B. Valentine's book, Interlocking Pieces, Twenty Questions for Understanding Literature ($2.95, available at A.S.U. bookstore) is an excellent source because, as the title indicates, there are twenty questions dealing with situation in the text, structure of the text, language in the text and the summation of the text. The answers to these twenty questions can be submitted in writing on an individual basis or as a group project.

After the script is compiled, a rehearsal schedule is set and students are to plan to rehearse during and after class periods. Each group has their day in class and members of the group will present the story and lead the discussion of the story on specific questions regarding the structure of the short story and how it applies to their particular story. Elements of plot, characterization, setting, mood, tone, style and literary terms such as; exposition, initial incident, rising action, climax, and denouement of their story are discussed by each group member. These discussions may be conducted before or after the story is performed. The audience will enter into the discussion by asking and responding to questions about the material. A short story usually takes twenty to thirty minutes to present and depending on the story, discussion can take one or two class periods.

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Each group member submits written assignments; responses to the twenty questions, a character analysis of some character in the story, not necessarily the character he is reading, and a precis of the selection in addition to some specific questions either in the text or teacher generated. The student has then analyzed the story several times, for the oral presentation, the discussion and the written assignments.

I find in some classes that "Living Literature" performance day is one of the highlights of the student's week. In many instances, the presentations and discussions of the stories is a competitive venture, to see which group has the most creative approach and challenging questions. Because the students have orally performed the story, they can discuss with authority each character's attitude toward himself and his particular situation. The result is their understanding of various characters. A student then knows the function of a particular dialogue or scene in the story because of close study of the text.

The style of presentation should be as simplistic as possible. The scripts, either typed or written on notebook paper, should be placed in a folder or small notebook for ease of handling. The folders should be uniform in size and preferably a dark color, so as not to distract the audience. Textbooks may be used if students are permitted to write in them the divisions of the parts. Select an area in the classroom that will serve as the stage and is visible to the audience. Characters may sit on stools, chairs, benches, ladders, or stand with their scripts. They can make entrances or exits and additional embellishments, such as taped music, a guitar or harmonica player; simple costuming, such as an apron or hat, suggestive of the character, will enhance the presentation. Staging elements should not detract from the primary purpose of the literature, only highlight it.

With an able and ambitious group, many creative activities can be done with the conjunction of the script adaptation, Video taping of the entire presentation or certain portions can be used for playback and discussion. The selections can be discussed in terms of film and television jargon, i.e., long shots, close-ups, pan. A multi-media approach, in which painting, music and other media are harmonized with the literature, may be used with all genres of literature. Students may write commercials for the story they are going to perform. One approach can be based on the period or the subject matter and locating a sponsor who would promote this type of story.

Use various methods to stimulate the imagination for writing assignments. Another activity is to interpret selections in such a way as to communicate a mood or meaning different from that which is ordinarily associated with that piece of literature. Take common items and devise similes and metaphors to describe these items, or write and read a parody of the selection. Produce a taped radio show using a certain theme, writer or groups of writers. Work with other English teachers and set up thematic programs on death, love, family, or have a science fiction or mythology program.

Make arrangements for maximum use of the school library for books, recordings, magazines, movies and audio-visual equipment. Use some of the excellent literature recordings available, Don Juan in Hell, John Brown's Body, The Hollow

Crown, and give frequent listening tests on these readings or the student readings which the students hear in class. Tape from PBS-TV such programs as Tennyson, Anyone or The Belle of Amherst. Talk to speech and drama people in your school for some assistance. Have district consultants provide workshops and take your students to see Readers Theatre productions in your area. Every March, the Desert Oral Interpretation Festival is held at the University of Arizona. Write Dave Williams of the Speech and Communications Department for information and plan to take your students to this event as audience members. As audience, they will learn much about literature and the manner of presentations. Ask your area university people to conduct workshops for you; Cliff White at NAU, Dave Williams at U of A and Janet Elsea and Kristin Valentine at ASU. I will be happy to come to your classroom and demonstrate some of the stories we have adapted and presented. Attend a summer institute. Dr. William J. Adams, a brilliant and energetic professor of speech at San Diego State University, has conducted summer workshops for the past six years for elementary, high school, junior college and university educators and librarians. This summer (1978), the Institute will go to London for four weeks and enjoy a marvelous educational and entertainment package. Plan now to attend this workshop and write to: Dr. William J. Adams, Speech Communication Department, San Diego State University, San Diego, CA 92115, for information.

The bibliography and sample scripts are offered as a springboard to assist you in getting started on a creative and inspiring activity. ENJOY! Bring "Living Literature" to your classroom today.

Editor's Note: Joan Steen Silberschlag is on sabbatical leave, 1977-78, adapting American literature short stories, poems, and The Red Badge of Courage for a Living Literature program in English classes. She is a cast member of the national tour of The Grapes of Wrath, sponsored by The Readers Theatre Institute of San Diego State University, Department of Continuing Education. Ms. Silberschlag has available Readers Theatre versions of several works suitable for young readers. Readers of AEB may contact her through Central High School, 4525 N. Central Ave., Phoenix, AZ 85012.

NOTES

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IMPROVING WRITING THROUGH THE USE OF SMALL PEER-GROUP DISCUSSIONS

Kay Rosier, Widener College, Chester, Pennsylvania

Despite current claims that students are not being taught to write correctly, conscientious English teachers everywhere are continually seeking new methods of encouraging student writing. Almost any increase in student writing, however, also involves an increase in the teacher's load of papers to read and correct. This paper suggests an oral classroom activity which can stimulate effective writing in both high school and college without increasing teacher workload. Small peer-group discussions provide a welcome change of pace in classroom procedure and are lively forums for genuine student involvement.

Usual Classroom Procedure

First, however, consider the usual procedure in most English classes. The teacher assigns a chapter in the text, and perhaps some sentence exercises, as homework. In class he/she might talk about a specific writing technique, lecture, go over exercises, and/or use chalkboard or media presentations as examples. Class involvement is often minimal because students do not respond freely. They are reluctant to be judged by teacher and class or they cannot organize their ideas in the brief time allowed for each answer. After this discussion the teacher probably assigns a homework or an in-class theme upon which students work individually. The theme produced is thus limited to the single student's resources and ability to apply in a short time the principles just learned. The teacher then grades and corrects the paper; the student receives the grade and may or may not read, understand, and use the teacher comments on it.

All of these oral activities--teacher lecture, media presentation, student presentation, and teacher-class dialogue--have value. They may relay information, stimulate interested students to think further, and provide opportunities for students to practice, if they wish, their skills of listening and speaking. But each method has its limitations, particularly for the poorly motivated student.

Teacher lecture can be boring. If no input is required of them, students tend to shut out a teacher's voice after a short while. Oral presentation by peers may interest them more, but in large classes each student will have very few opportunities to give presentations. Insecure students may dread standing up before an entire class, and may therefore profit very little from such presentations.

Media presentations in films, film strips, and records seldom require student input and are also easy to shut out. Teacher-class dialogue, often called "class discussion," is in fact not class discussion at all but a series of teacher-student dialogues. Only one student speaks at a time and every oral exchange must involve the teacher as examiner or moderator. In a 40-minute class perhaps 8-10 students can speak. Loquacious students are often allowed to dominate the group because teachers need their contributions in order to keep the ball rolling. Many students do not participate at all.

Advantages of Peer Discussions

There are distinct advantages to using small peer groups to vary oral activities in English class and to encourage writing. First of all, students learn to work cooperatively. The class can be broken into groups of four or five students and specific tasks (of which more later) set for them, so that they must work together toward a specific goal. Groups should be changed frequently to allow a variety of personality and ability combinations, and to prevent establishment of dominance by the same students each time.

Secondly, peer discussion lends the class an informal atmosphere which gives restless students an opportunity for physical movement--arranging chairs in groups, or changing seats--and gives them also a legitimate reason to talk to each other.

A third value of small groups is that they provide intimate settings in which ordinarily shy or diffident students may speak. These students seem more willing to raise questions or make suggestions when only three or four of their peers are listening than when the teacher and the entire class are attentive. The general classroom buzz of small groups at work provides a screen for tentative remarks. Furthermore, it is apparently less threatening to have a peer reject a suggestion than to have a teacher do so. Generally, students feel that a teacher knows too much and expects students to be perfect. Students, especially the older ones, seem to listen more carefully to criticism from their peers and to accept it more cheerfully than they would receive a teacher's remarks. They seem to feel, rightly or wrongly, that peer standards are more reasonable, although students generally pull no punches in pointing out each other's errors. In addition, each student has a chance to criticize as well as to be criticized--which is not the case in the one-way relationship with the teacher--thus sharpening student analytical skills.

A further value of peer discussion is that students tend to see work in their groups as a kind of play. Their sense of humor comes to the fore and wild ideas or brainstorming in the relaxed atmosphere sometimes frees up the creative process and generates valuable ideas. Each student gets a chance to speak more often in a group of three to five than in a group of 30. A student can verbalize half-formed ideas and reactions in an easy conversational way, and let others build on them.

There is no competition for the teacher's attention and approval because the concrete result of the group's work will represent all of the individuals in the group. In fact, the use of discussion groups temporarily shifts the focus from the teacher as source of information and judgments. It makes students facilitators of each other's thinking, the audience for their thoughts, and the critics of their success. The teacher's role is to set the task, to monitor groups in order to keep students on task, and to answer such questions as students cannot manage among themselves.

Preliminary to Individual Writing

Small group discussions can be used before students begin their individual writing. They can talk among themselves about the assignment and make a trial run of the technique being taught. One idea may spark another, criticism is

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exchanged, and joint decisions made about the value of various suggestions. The group may then, if required, use their common insights to produce a piece of group writing. Jokes about committee documents notwithstanding, joint writing is valuable for the process it encourages, if not for the splendid stylistic result. The group goes through much the same process that a single student does, except that the resources are the experiences and abilities of several people instead of one. After working through an assignment in a small group, the student is better prepared to undertake a similar assignment alone.

Sample Discussion Procedure

For an example of the small group technique, imagine that an objective for an English class is to encourage the use of precise words in descriptions. The procedure would be more or less as follows:

- --The class reads a detailed description of a character from a piece of literature.
- --The teacher discusses briefly the use of words ranging from the general (*walk*) to the specific (*stride*, *strut*, *meander*) and may also review previous work with connotation/denotation or figurative language.
- --Students break into small groups and work orally on assigned tasks. Each group will
  - -*discuss* the assigned description from the literature and find the precise words that made the description vivid.
  - -*itemize* the personal characteristics the writer has described (*voice*, *hair*, *manner of walking*, *gesture*).
  - -*imagine* a new character they wish to describe.
  - -*write* a description for their new character, using precise words and phrases for each characteristic itemized above.
  - -*identify* the meaning and overtones of their word choices and discuss the new character they have created.
  - -*present* their description to the class and invite comments on it.
- --As homework, the student then writes a description of his/her *own* appearance and mannerisms, using precise and vivid terms.
- --The following day papers are collected, shuffled and handed out so that each student receives someone else's paper.

--Students try to match the description they received to the student writer in the class.

--Time is provided so that the writer and reader of each paper can sit together and discuss the effectiveness of the paper. The reader rates it as vague, imaginative, dull, or precise, giving reason for the rating and making suggestions for improvement.

--Students meet in their groups again and discuss each paper. They may help each other describe themselves more clearly or applaud a piece of good writing.

--After a series of small group discussions the teacher might assign a paper for teacher marking, reminding students to incorporate the techniques explored in their groups.

Of course, peer discussion cannot be used exclusively in any class. Like other methods, it has its disadvantages. For one thing, students know less than teachers and need to draw on the teacher's greater expertise as expressed in traditional teaching methods. For another thing, students are not as experienced as teachers in constructive criticism and, although they often sense and articulate what is wrong, they cannot always suggest the best ways in which to correct it. Then, too, some students will abuse the freedom of oral group activities and need to be brought back to the task at hand. Highly verbal students may still tend to dominate the group or lazy ones coast along while others work. However, the extra student freedom means that the group probably will keep its members in order with considerable frankness. A reasonable class with respect for the teacher and the habit of control quickly becomes accustomed to the method.

A variety of classroom activities is probably superior to any single approach, no matter how good, because variety keeps students alert and allows them to learn through the modes best suited to their own ways of dealing with knowledge. Small group discussion, however, is employed perhaps less often than other kinds of oral activities, in spite of the fact that it offers unique opportunity for pleasant and valuable peer tutoring.

Teachers may find that they enjoy experimenting with these discussions which give students a chance to think through and practice effective use of words. Peer discussion sparks class interest and helps students to recall and later use the principles and techniques studied in the lively company of their peers.

SPEECH AND DRAMA IN THE ENGLISH CLASS

Pat Stewart, Miami, Arizona, High School

With the back to the basics cry presently being voiced by the public, many English teachers either by choice or mandate find themselves planning a new program minus the electives of recent years. Often this involves removing speech and drama courses from the curriculum along with the other electives.

Most English teachers, however, feel that speech and drama are an integral part of the language arts experience and, therefore, should be incorporated into the total program. A method must then be devised whereby these may be included as a part of the courses offered whether they be called English I, II, III, and IV or something of a more exotic nature.

Considering the importance of speech and drama and the broadness of their application, a hit and miss introductory type of teaching is not suitable. The materials must be carefully incorporated into the overall program.

Many students think of "speech" as the excruciatingly painful process of standing before a class and giving an oral report upon a previously selected topic using only notes as guides. However, this need not be the case. Several teachers that I know have found speech a particularly valuable tool to use in establishing rapport with their classes.

They have not leapt into the project stunning students by suddenly requesting that a five-minute speech be made the following day. Their introduction has begun, sometimes with a discussion of body language and other times with an exchange concerning the feelings people have about speaking to friends, teachers and large and small groups. The nature of speech fears is evaluated and an attempt is made to conquer them. Discussions can lead to the presentation of informational speeches, reference and demonstration speeches as well as impromptu ones on various topics.

Instructional speeches can range from how to throw a pot to how to be a winning rodeo bull rider. These easily create a sense of togetherness and openness among classmates and aid in creating student teacher rapport.

Students can learn note taking, as well as various library skills and research methods while seeking information for speeches. When the topics are presented to the class the audience can sharpen their notetaking and listening skills. Assuming that the reports relate to the language area in some way, the students will be simultaneously increasing their knowledge of various authors, semantics, or whatever subject the chosen topic has covered.

Both listeners and speakers usually become especially involved in demonstration speeches. Some of them have proven to be particularly appealing. Students always favor the "how to create a cake demonstration" with the final product being enjoyed by both students and teacher.

A suggested format for incorporating speech skills can be found at the end of this article. Most types of speeches can be easily adapted for use in grades seven through twelve. Often these studies can be used to provide a change of pace from the regular classroom activities.

Drama also offers another wonderful opportunity to do something different and at the same time provide important information. It can be approached in various ways. Drama can be introduced in connection with a speech unit or it can follow the study of drama as literature. The teacher can change from a silent reading of Look Homeward Angel to an oral reading and enactment of it.

A variation of this can be provided by dividing students into groups. Each group can then produce a tape of their assigned portion of the play including all sound effects. A great deal of interest is aroused as students strive to create effective sound effects and proper voices for the roles they are playing. When all groups are finished the completed radio play can be heard by the entire class. Constructive criticisms can be voiced so that future efforts of this nature will provide even better results.

This assignment can be a valuable one, with or without previous study of the play as literature, depending upon the instructional objectives involved. Juniors and seniors do particularly well with an assignment of this type, and it does provide a change of pace from the usual English class session.

Almost any play can be utilized for this project. Some suggestions are listed below:

> Look Homeward Angel by Katti Frings (from the novel by Thomas Wolfe)
>
> A View from the Bridge by Arthur Miller
>
> The Brownsville Raid by Charles Fuller (In case you are not familiar with this one it is the true story of 167 black soldiers accused of murder. It was a 1976 off-Broadway hit by the Negro Ensemble Company.)
>
> Marty by Paddy Chayefsky

Students with reading problems might utilize Scope magazine plays or teleplays for the assignment. Among these the following could be included:

> Liza's Pioneer Diary by Nell Cox (a teleplay)
>
> The Five-Finger Discount by Jerry McNeely
>
> Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde (a radio play based on the story by Robert Louis Stevenson)
>
> Captain Courageous (a teleplay written by John Gay, based on the book by Rudyard Kipling)

Younger students could also be involved in the above project if the plays selected were appropriate for their grade level. A more effective way to utilize enthusiasm of the seventh through ninth grade group is to first introduce plays by having students become involved in reading them orally. Some students in this age group find silent reading of dialogue quite difficult. However, once a play has come alive for them through oral reading, they will usually enthusiastically tackle other plays.

In order to incorporate the study of drama into the total language program, students can each be asked to write their own short play. A committee can then be formed to select three or four of the best scripts. The class can be divided into groups and each group can quickly plan sets, costumes and production techniques for the play they have chosen. It is not necessary to devote a great deal of time to planning since the production will be done within the classroom and need not be extremely elaborate.

A variation of this idea is to have students read several short stories. After the stories have been discussed students could be asked to select their favorite story and adapt it for television; in effect the assignment is to create a teleplay based on a short story that they have read.

This will give those involved practice in organization of subject matter as well as practice in improving writing skills. The assignment lends itself to entire classroom use or it would work equally well as an extra credit assignment for advanced students. Some short stories that lend themselves to this type of assignment are:

"The Open Window" by Saki

"Old Man at the Bridge" by Ernest Hemingway

"The Necklace" by Guy de Maupassant

"Early Marriage" by Conrad Richter

"The Monkey's Paw" by W. W. Jacobs

Still another way to incorporate speech and drama into the regular program is through composition. Most students need a great deal of practice in composition. One of the major deficiencies that many seem to have as authors is a lack of proofreading and editing skills. For additional practic in utilizing those skills speeches can be written. After the class has written several types of speeches, a day can be set aside for reading and editing them. Students should exchange papers for this project. (If the teacher chooses, the papers can be identified by numbers rather than name.) After all papers have been carefully proofread and edited, they can be given to a committee of student judges. The committee will then select the best speeches and these can be used to compile a booklet containing the best of the class's efforts. The same procedures can be followed for student written plays. If the instructor wishes, both the speeches and the plays can be organized into booklet form.

These, of course, are only a few of the ways to integrate speech and drama into the regular English program. Hopefully these suggestions will provide helpful additions to the English programs of others.

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The English Curriculum Under Fire

The Department of Education at the University of Chicago will present a conference, "The English Curriculum Under Fire," June 22-24, 1978. The conference will examine what is really basic to instruction in English and language arts and explore procedures for developing defensible curricula. Speakers include Bruno Bettelheim on "The Role of the Unconscious in Learning to Read"; Wayne C. Booth on "Our Public as Resource and Problem: My Basics are More Basic Than Your Basics"; James R. Squire on "The Collision of the Basics Movement and Current Research on Language"; and James E. Miller, Jr. on "Basics and the Imagination."

Panels and seminars, designed to foster a lively interchange of ideas between speakers and conference participants, will follow presentations by speakers. The panels will explore topics such as "The Goals, Content, and Organization of Literature Programs, K-12," "Composition, Grammar and the Basics Movement," and "Defensible Curricula in Language Arts and English." Participants will be able to engage in two seminars consisting of four one-hour sessions each. Answers to a variety of questions pertinent to the topics will be examined by the groups. Seminar topics include the following:

What is Basic in Composing?
What We Have Achieved in Teaching Language Arts and English: Interpreting Test Scores
Evaluation in the Language Arts: Accountability and the Responsibility of Teachers
The Collision of Traditional Grammar, Modern Linguistics, and the Back-to-Basics Movement
Basic Language Competencies in the Elementary Curriculum

Seminar leaders include George Hillocks, Jr., University of Chicago; Stephen Judy, Michigan State University; John Mellon, University of Illinois, Chicago Circle; Lee Odell, SUNY, Buffalo; and Walter Petty, SUNY, Buffalo.

Seminars will focus on examining assumptions about what is basic in English and languate arts. Such discussion will enable participants to gain insights into philosophy, content, and procedures of their own curricula and to generate defensible curricula which meet the demands and needs of their various communities.

For more information contact: F. A. Kachur, Conference Coordinator
Judd Hall, Room 334
5835 Kimbark Avenue
Chicago, IL 60637

PANTOMIME AND IMPROVISATION AS CREATIVE DRAMATICS

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and
Sister Angeline Cepelka, Sacred Heart School, Yonkers, New York

Dramatics for children has been called "a form of sympathetic magic,"[1] an expression that seems to be highly in keeping with the notion of drama as imagination played out in a way that brings the world of magic, the realm of the make-believe, quite truly into the here and now. Nevertheless, to say that "drama is nothing more than acting and pretending things we really aren't and would someday like to be"[2] overlooks what seems to be the underlying value of the imaginative and creative mind that produces such "acting." It presents the opportunities for its participants to articulate their thoughts, actions, emotions, and passions which are struggling for creative expression.[3]

Creative dramatics aims primarily at the personal development of the children involved. The emphasis is on doing the action of the present rather than formal preparation for production and presentation to an audience. Unlike children's theater, creative dramatics in the classroom involves children in a process of expression characterized by imagination, flexibility, and elasticity. Furthermore, since it develops naturally out of the game-instinct common to all children, creative dramatics usually can be pursued in some form by everyone.[4]

Although it is impossible to exhaust the various forms creative dramatics can take within most educational settings, two types will be described here. Both pantomime and improvisation allow for a natural and free flow of spontaneous expression.

Pantomime

As a type of creative dramatics, mime or pantomime is essentially "movement with meaning,"[5] the success of which rests on keenness of observation and accuracy of memory. Mime done slowly, with ample gestures that are "a little larger than life,"[6] draws freely on the imagination of the participants.

Mime becomes, then, the coordination of mind and body. It demonstrates, as an initial process in developing creative dramatics with children, that drama comes from within the child rather than from some outside setting or stimulus. It begins with a period of stillness in order to examine or explore the subject or character being portrayed, and it moves the student in its various stages of complexity through the following steps: simple action movements, the delineation of character, instinctive movements which portray some emotion or a physical or moral sensation, descriptive or speaking movements, and finally complementary movements in which the entire body helps to convey the meaning suggested by the chief movement.[7]

Pantomime effectively illustrates to the child the significance of non-verbal communication and the difficulty of "not speaking," at times, even in the absence of words, since unconscious feelings constantly reveal themselves through various forms of body language. Many specialists believe that music is essential to the art of miming,[8] and certainly an examination of dance, rhythm, and bodily movements in general as related to miming could become a comprehensive study in itself.

Pantomime can be considered a process of creative dramatics, the product of which is heightened sensitivities within the children who participate.[9] Such children should be encouraged, not to "look happy or surprised,"[10] but to actually feel those emotions in their attempts at portrayal.

Types of pantomime can include pure mime in which no costume or props are used and which is a highly skilled and specialized dramatic form, normally done only by professionals; mime with costumes in which character or situational portrayal is aided by the use of costumes, props, or other external devices; and mime with masks. Such masks, furthermore, may include the impersonal white mask which removes the identity and personality of the participant, a realistic character mask, or a fantastic mask which transforms the participant into someone or something he "could not be."[11]

Although pantomime is undoubtedly a form of creative dramatics complete and significant in its own right, it can well serve as natural preparation for improvisation as another dramatic form.

Improvisation

Often confused with mime, improvisation is "impromptu invention"[12] which includes speech, while pantomime as described previously, employs only movement in the communication process. Basic to the nature of improvisation, as it is for mime, however, is the concept of immediacy, of a moment to moment progression which is really only contrived once. If repeated, improvisation becomes converted into a form of memorization which is not generally congruous with a totally creative approach. Improvisation, as a process, is "a slice of life happening for the first . . . and only time."[13]

Specific goals for improvisation used as an educational approach could include the increased ability of the participants to listen closely and react directly to an interlocutor, to devise ad hoc rhetorical plays for getting certain effects and results, to stimulate the language, style and voice of someone else, to shift roles and "stand in others' shoes," to feel from the inside, as in pantomime, the dynamics that comprise the dramatic scene, and to act out and express real feelings in a situation made safe by the knowledge that they are "someone else." As a significant form of drama, improvisation translates "what happened" into "what is happening," in the moment to moment spontaneity which is its essence.[14]

Basic skills for the participants in improvisation must include the ability to make an immediate reaction or response to some unknown stimulus, and a facility in creating a character while it evolves.[15] Naturally, too, the benefits of improvisation in improving oral skills are unlimited. Further attention to such advantages will be given in the following section.

The logical question concerning suitable content matter for improvisation again leads to the realm of practically no restrictions. Possibilities for dramatization include selections from literature, interviews, and student writing, but appropriate subjects should be determined, in a progressive way, according to the interests of the group and leader's creativity. Children will soon learn, in the case of improvising literary short stories or other selections, that their dramatic speech and action must supply all that can be communicated and described verbally in print. They will ultimately progress from improvising the actions of imaginary characters in the world of fantasy to the exploration of the inner feelings and motivations of characters in the real world as well, often as characters in conflict with each other.[16]

Improvisation seems to be most effectively approached in small group settings and, as noted earlier, on a "one-time" basis. Although observers may interrupt improvisation to question those participating, and actors should be encouraged to ask each other the reasons for a particular type of character portrayal,[17] such questioning must be guided by the leader into a positive educational process.

As a form of creative dramatics which is definitely not theater-oriented, improvisation requires only a group of children, a willing and qualified leader or teacher, space enough for the children to move about freely, and an idea from which to create. That creative process, for the leader, usually involves motivating the children to a specific mood, sharing some story or idea--or eliciting one from them--guiding them into a plan for playing, and into creating while playing, and guiding them to evaluate what has happened through their efforts.[18] The benefit of improvisation as a process for children is the participation experience itself.

Implications

A continuous program of creative dramatics should be maintained on every age level. The program should provide experience in all forms; children do not "graduate" from pantomime, for instance, into improvisation. Each form remains a separate process, highly significant in and of itself, in the development, not of actors, but of imaginative human beings.[19]

Furthermore, surveys have shown that the relationship between an effective creative dramatics program and improved oral language skills among children at various age levels is a positive one. Niedermeyer and Oliver, for example, showed that experience in pantomime, extemporaneous speaking, improvisation, and simple play production for kindergarten and first grade children did promote selected dramatic and speaking skills.[20] Some research indicates that children's participation in dramatics may have the effect of an emotional catharsis or a "safety valve" for tensions that need to be released in a therapeutic way. In fact, a category of creative dramatics called psychodrama has as its purpose to help individuals overcome fear, improve social behavior techniques, understand and accept physical and mental abnormalities in other children, and meet daily frustrations.[21] Although creative dramatics should in no way be considered a panacea for personal disorders or a preventive for future conflicts, it should be noted that, in addition to its role in the development of creative personalities, drama for children provides a variety of approaches to meet the needs of those who are less endowed with imaginative power as well as those who are more sensitive in that regard.

Creative dramatics, which "brings the stuff of life into the classrooms,"[22] must not lose that purpose within more traditional settings. The emphasis should remain, particularly in earlier years, on the ideas and work of the children. The benefits of involving a class in play creation include meeting the needs of each particular group more effectively, sharpening children's powers of thinking and creativity, and giving the child a new perspective on movement and language as forms of expression.

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SMALL GROUP PROCESS IN THE ENGLISH CLASSROOM

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Talk is the dominant medium of the classroom but like other readily available commodities, it is often undervalued and sold short. While certain kinds of "schooltalk"--recitation, class discussion, and lectures, for example--have become methodological fixtures, random conversation among students is usually frowned upon and squelched in the interest of keeping order and reducing noise. Few teachers would question the importance of oral language activities in the English program; considerably fewer would acknowledge the validity of open-ended verbal exchange, especially in the face of established disciplines like speech, which stress order, formality, and structure.

Between the extremes of formal oral language training and loose talk lies a fallow middle ground of natural language usage rife with potential for developing linguistic competence, intellectual skills, social growth, and a lot else. Small group process--the purposeful conversational interaction of a handful of learners--allows the natural communicative impulses of young people to be directed in ways that are personally meaningful while exerting upon them the greatest tolerable pressure to use their linguistic resources in the widest and deepest ways.

Small group discussion at its best capitalizes on the power of verbal interchage, on the convergence of language, experience, and thought occurring in any engrossing conversation. When this happens, individual thought and language are challenged by the collective demands of the group. External social forces are brought to bear on personal cognitive and linguistic resources. Students are confronted with ideas, experiences, and perceptions different from their own and can test personal apprehension and understanding against that of their peers instead of an unquestioned authority.

The central theory behind small group discussion is well stated by James Moffett:

> . . . people incorporate into themselves the ideas and arguments they hear, and their future thinking, even when they are alone, reflects the external dialogues they have internalized. (*A Student -Centered Language Arts Curriculum, Grades K-13: A Handbook for Teachers* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1968), p. 292.

As proficiency in group discussion increases, so does the ability of students to teach each other, since growth in intellectual development and linguistic power is marked by a greater capacity for internalizing and subsequently using new patterns of language. This kind of social, interactive learning is both less formal and more natural than customary classroom practice has permitted--an unhappy but established fact.

The purposes of small group work extend beyond the conventional objectives of language instruction to include, affectively, the development of communication skills, interpersonal relations, and self-understanding--holistic individual growth. Students are called upon to practice the same natural learning behaviors--perceiving, responding, valuing, organizing, and characterizing--they use in the everyday world, using the social medium of language in specific discussion situations. The very nature of small group interaction brings these natural human abilities into play.

Cognitively, group discussion can contribute to the development of intellectual abilities that have typically been difficult to teach. Problem solving--the central task of small group work--requires students to move beyond the receptive processes of knowing and comprehending to the generative processes of analyzing, synthesizing, and evaluating. It challenges them to take an active part in their own learning, a challenge most are ready to take, especially if the problem under discussion affects them personally.

Beginnings

The key to implementing small group discussion in the classroom is finding a genuine motive for student discussion. Assigning "interesting" topics is not enough: students will not sustain group discussion just because they are given a suitable subject. What drives them to explore a topic in a consistent, thorough, intensive way is the conviction that both the subject and the discussion of it are personally meaningful to them. Thus the motivating task of the teacher is to enlist the emotions and desires of students in support of discussion, not to entice them to talk.

While there are no foolproof methods for initiating group discussion successfully, the likelihood of involving students in authentic discussion is increased if the following guidelines and principles are employed.

1) Pose issues of significance for young people in the form of discussion topics.

2) Significant issues most often are based on or arise out of personal experience (or lack of it).

3) Significant issues for older secondary students often involve role-definition, social conduct, and moral principles.

4) Significant issues for younger students often involve matters of ego-concern and personal identity.

5) Older secondary students are able to discuss the meaning of experience; their discussions can be more abstract than those of younger students, which tend to be literal and concrete.

The best source of discussion issues is students themselves. Before-class conversations can yield any number of authentic discussion subjects to teachers who are willing to eavesdrop for a few minutes before beginning class. (A more direct approach is simply to ask students what they would like to discuss, though their responses may be shaped in part by their reading of their teacher's expectations.) Sometimes too, a topic is suggested by the ongoing work of the class, as, for example, when a literary work touches on an issue close to the personal lives of the students. This is a time when group discussion can help literary as well as personal development.

Organization and Control

Tapping genuine sources of discussion is but one aspect of using small group process, which teachers need to direct from start to finish. Faulty planning can bring even the most promising discussion to a stumbling halt. Teachers should conceptualize the entire group process and develop clear objectives before initiating it. It then becomes much easier to frame the specific directions--the tasks, questions, and procedures--that will guide each discussion group. When the discussion process is underway, teachers need to help sustain it, keeping in mind the flexible nature of group discussion--the number of different roles students may play in it, and the possibility of its taking unexpected turns. Periodic checking of the progress of group discussion is a must. At times it is necessary to take an active part in the discussion, urging it along or helping students over stuckpoints by clarifying issues, establishing meanings, relating ideas, introducing new concepts, or summarizing arguments. At other times, merely listening in is sufficient to monitor a group's progress and to spur it along. The important difference in small group process is the chance it offers teachers to become part of the learning process rather than standing back from it and "instructing" students, then judging their learning from an objective distance.

Often the nature of small group discussion will require students to assume certain specific roles. A recorder is sometimes necessary, particularly in groups that need to use the ideas they have generated in later, related work. Depending on the capabilities of the class, a discussion leader is often feasible, someone who can help keep a group on its assigned course. Responsibility for making small group work "go" rests ultimately with the participants, as anyone who has ever taken part in it will confirm. Thus group discussion is an excellent way to experience firsthand the demands of self-determined learning.

In determining the structure of small groups, teachers will confront a number of longstanding barriers to social interaction: cliques, sex, race, and timidity, among others. There is much to be said for allowing students to choose their own groups at first, with the stipulation that they rotate into different ones in the future. In this way, the initial stages of small group work--so crucial to its success--will be impeded by fewer obstacles than if all aspects of interpersonal dynamics are treated at once. If students know they are expected to interact with all others at some point, they are less likely to balk at doing so when the time comes. Cooperation, tolerance, and respect for different people and points of view are by-products of small group work, though they often develop slowly. Calling attention to grouping problems by openly manipulating group membership is less apt to have a salutary effect than is stressing positively the need for sharing responsibility for the group's success and then giving that responsibility to the students.

Groups should be small--four to six students is ideal--though class size and space limitations may dictate a larger number. Anything over eight is unwieldy and doesn't merit the term "small." Generally, if any group member is, by virtue of the size of the group alone, prevented from personally engaging every other member, the group is too large and ought to be reduced in size. Groups should be arranged so that the members can face each other, either in circles of desks or chairs, or around tables, or even on the floor.

Risks

Small group work has its risks, but they are relatively minor and controllable in the hands of a purposeful, well-planned teacher. There may be some confusion at first--particularly if the experience is new to the students, the teacher, or both--and some time might be "wasted" in getting started. Typically, however, the level of confusion falls well within the tolerance limits established by most school environments, and the time spent initiating group discussion is measured only in minutes. Both risks are minimized by clear directions from the teacher, a good understanding of the purposes and procedures of small group work, and some class discussion of them before beginning.

Fears that group discussion is too "intense," or that it is really a version of sensitivity training, are unfounded. Small group work is simply a way of getting learners in direct communication with each other in educational tasks--to teach students how to learn from each other. (It is, in fact, used widely outside the classroom--in business, industry, and government--as a management and decision-making tool.) If students "encounter" each other, they do so in only a slightly more structured manner than in their regular conversational exchanges outside of class. Far from forcing students into personally compromising situations, small group process gives them the chance to practice thinking and talking in less inhibiting forums than the classroom usually allows.

Evaluation

In evaluating small group process, teachers will likely have recourse to some kinds of unobtrusive measurement techniques. The desired outcome of group discussion--particularly over extended periods of time--has less to do with specific performance--or task-centered objectives than with developmental goals. Improved language usage and communication skills do not occur in convenient chunks; therefore they are not best detected by conventional measures--tests, quizzes, and standardized instruments. Rather, teachers need to develop their abilities to assess group communication processes and to be on the lookout for signs of advancing linguistic and intellectual skills: increasing explicitness of verbal expression, increasing originality of expression, growing ability to use abstract language, and the like. The greatest contribution of small group process to student development is to help them discover, or to be shown, the effects of their language on others and, conversely, to feel its effects themselves.

Direct outcomes of small group work can include written and oral reports, open forums, class discussions, various kinds of media presentations, newspaper and magazine "publications," panel discussions, colloquiums, symposia, and other forms of public discourse.

"TURNING ON" THE SCARLET LETTER

Jean Bressler and Eileen Johnson, University of Nebraska at Omaha

ANNOUNCER: "On a Field, Sable, The Letter A, Gules."

MUSIC: Theme music up full and under. (Johann Sebastian Bach, "Passacaglia and Fugue in C Minor," performed on the organ by E. Power Biggs, Columbia Records.)

ANNOUNCER: "The curious investigator stared at the herald's wording. He felt an unexplained shiver as he hazed about this oldest section of burial ground beside King's Chapel, dating back to the late seventeenth century."

SOUND: Cold wind whistling, leaves rustling.

INVESTIGATOR: "All around are monuments carved with armorial bearings; and on this simple slab of slate, this single tombstone marking two old and sunken graves, appears the semblance of an engraved escutcheon. How curious is the wording. I admit the purport perplexes me. I sense some somber and gloomy tale."

. . . .

The preceding sample suggests what students might do in transforming Nathaniel Hawthorne's The Scarlet Letter into a one-hour radio play of eight dramatized excerpts. As a culminating activity in the study of this literary work, students would combine drama with the basic communicative skills of reading, listening, writing, and speaking.

With students so television-conscious and with the literary series so popular--"The Forsythe Saga" and "Upstairs, Downstairs" on Masterpiece Theater, "Heidi" and "The Prince and the Pauper" on Once Upon A Classic, and "Captains and the Kings" and "Rich Man, Poor Man" on commercial television--why not borrow a successful idea for "turning on" students to literature in the classroom?

Instead of television, use a radio program because the latter will avoid the obstacles of costumes, set design, and props. Thus students can concentrate their efforts on (1) analyzing and identifying the essential elements of the novel for condensation into a one-hour presentation, (2) determining auditory stimuli for the listening audience, (3) script writing, (4) producing the program, and (5) taping or broadcasting the final program.

Preliminary Steps

First, the teacher should play a record of an authentic radio broadcast of a dramatic program, possibly an episode from Sherlock Holmes: Tales from Baker Street, starring Basil Rathbone and Nigel Bruce; a police adventure from Gang Busters, starring Art Carney; or a part of Orson Welles' adaptation of H. G. Wells' War of the Worlds. Then, the teacher should select a part of the recently read novel for the class to deal with as a group. For example, students should brainstorm various ideas for changing the visual description of Chapter 1--"The Prison-Door" to an auditory experience, such as:

> "Why not have a stranger ask questions of the townspeople gathered outside the prison?"
>
> "He could be a sea captain. Boston has a harbor and ships dock there."
>
> "Groups of townspeople could converse with one another as in the second chapter. More dialogue could be added from the descriptive information."
>
> "The oaken door has rusty iron hinges. Why not a squeaking sound?"
>
> "What about using a narrator or announcer to describe things--like the part about the rose contrasting with the darkness all around?"

Next, the teacher should give the students a handout of instructions for the five stages of development for each of the excerpts of the novel, should present written samples of radio scripts as models of the format, and should supervise the division of the students into four groups. After the groups complete each of the first three stages, the teacher should bring all the students together in order to examine the excerpts in progress and to make necessary choices for the continuity of the final program.

Each group would prepare an excerpt of no more than fifteen minutes of taped material. The assignments might look like this:

Group 1--Introduction

    Characters

Group 2--Opening scaffold scene

    Changing attitude toward the A

Group 3--Second scaffold scene

    Forest scene

Group 4--Third scaffold scene

    Conclusion

What follows is a brief description of what one of the four groups would need to do in working through the five stages of development.

STAGE ONE: ANALYZING AND IDENTIFYING ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS FOR THE EXCERPT

The group is working on the first scaffold scene, reading and re-reading sections in order to prepare the list of elements.

1. Mood of gloom--townspeople dressed in dark-colored garments; prison and cemetery are first structures of the town; ugly, unsightly appearance--rusty, stained, weedy, gloomy. Rose is one contrasting note.

2. Setting--Boston, late seventeenth century.

3. Puritan character of townspeople--severity shown; women conversing by scaffold--show how religion and law are interwined; Hester broke law--religious commandment--by her adultery; only one voice shows compassion for Hester.

4. Hester comes from dark prison, carrying three-month-old baby; description of her appearance and manner.

5. Procession to scaffold.

6. Ambiguity of the scene of mother and child--foreshadowing of later view of the scarlet A.

7. Representatives of government and church on balcony of meeting-house overlooking scaffold--like box seats at a play.

8. Hester's thoughts--flashback information about her home and parents and about her husband, the "slightly deformed . . . misshapen scholar."

9. Chillingsworth on edge of crowd--recognized by Hester--his reaction to Hester's shame--his signal for her silence.

10. Chillingsworth questions townspeople about Hester's crime, her sentence.

11. Chillingsworth's vow that father's name "will be known."

12. Wilson's appeal to Hester to name the father of her child--Dimmesdale's appeal--Hester's reply--Hester's return to prison.

STAGE TWO: DETERMINING AUDITORY STIMULI FOR THE LISTENING AUDIENCE

The group uses the list prepared in stage one and suggests the following auditory stimuli:

1. MUSIC: Theme music--the Bach piece.
2. MUSIC: Same music continues.
3. SOUND: Murmurs of the crowd.
4. SOUND: Prison door squeaks open.
5. SOUND: Shuffling feet; footsteps on wooden stairs; murmurs from crowd.
6. MUSIC: Selection from George Frederic Handel's "The Messiah."
7. No sound effects.

8. MUSIC: "Air," an English song by Henry Purcell.
SOUND: Cry of baby.
9. MUSIC: First four notes of Ludwig von Beethoven's "Fifth Symphony."
SOUND: Cry of baby.
10. No sound effects.
11. No sound effects.
12. SOUND: Murmurs of voices; baby coos.
MUSIC: "Impertinence" by George Frederic Handel.
SOUND: Baby wails and screams; prison door closes.

After each group has prepared a list of auditory stimuli to correspond with the lists of elements from stage one, the class as a whole would meet to make final decisions on musical selections and sounds, taking ideas offered from all the groups.

STAGE THREE: SCRIPT WRITING

The group is scripting from item 12 as designated in stages one and two and approved by the class as a whole. A sample follows:

WILSON: "Speak to the woman, my brother. It is of moment to her soul. Exhort her to confess the truth."

SOUND: Full silence for three seconds.

DIMMESDALE: "Hester Prynne, thou hearest what this good man says. If thou feelest it to be for thy soul's peace, I charge thee to speak out the name of thy fellow-sinner and fellow-sufferer!"

SOUND: Baby coos--fade in and continue through.

DIMMESDALE: "Take heed how thou deniest to him--who, perchance, hath not the courage to grasp it for himself--the bitter, but wholesome, cup that is now presented to thy lips."

ANNOUNCER: "So powerful seemed the minister's appeal that the people could not believe but that Hester Prynne would speak out the guilty name. But Hester shook her head."

WILSON: "Woman, transgress not beyond the limits of Heaven's mercy! Speak out the name!"

MUSIC: "Impertinence" by George Frederic Handel--fade in and up and under.

HESTER: "Never!"

CHILLINGSWORTH: "Speak, woman! Speak; and give your child a father!"

HESTER: "I will not speak!"

. . . .

STAGE FOUR: PRODUCING THE PROGRAM

The entire class has completed the script, has polished all the excerpts for continuity, and is now ready to produce the radio play. First, students must identify their key participants--director, announcer, actors, sound-effects technicians. (See Richard A. Maynard, ed., *Mass Communications Arts 1: Sound and Sight*, New York: Scholastic Book Services, 1975.)

For the first effort at producing a radio play, the teacher probably should take on the important job of director--possibly a student could be assistant director--because this person must direct the play's interpretation; make characters, sound-effects, and moods harmonize; and supervise the production and performance.

Before selecting the actors, the class should discuss the characters carefully. For instance, the announcer should have a good, strong voice. The actors should be able to convey through the dialogue images of the various characters. Students from all the groups might try out for the roles with the entire class voting for the best ones for the final broadcast.

A committee of several students from all groups will need to obtain, make, and coordinate the sound-effects described in the script. They should strive for realism. Without "going overboard," they should create just the right amount of background for the dialogue. One of the sound-effects technicians should play the music as necessary to set the mood, bridge scenes, or furnish background.

Now, students should put the parts all together and rehearse for the final broadcast.

STAGE FIVE: TAPING OR BROADCASTING THE FINAL PROGRAM

The class may either tape-record the radio play or broadcast it *live* within the classroom or over a public address system.

The culmination of the radio play has synthesized a variety of English skills into a unified, creative class effort. Students engaged in dramatizing, close reading of the text, attentive listening, cooperative group work in organizing and planning for a final production, following a format (following specific directions), researching music of the period of the story, showing ingenuity in providing appropriate sounds, writing dialogue, paraphrasing description and narration, and evaluating the results.

The electronic media--in this case, radio--may be the vehicle for "turning on" students to literature, for putting new life into the printed page through dramatization--may it be novel, short story, ballad, whatever.

ANNOUNCER: "Try it; they'll like it."

THE ORAL READING APPROACH IN THE ENGLISH SURVEY COURSE

Charles B. Taylor and Robert Esch, University of Texas at El Paso

Is it any longer possible to reach the student in the English survey course? The return of a new silent generation of students to this course has necessitated a search for a novel approach for this course which must be--if we are honest with ourselves--after composition courses, the least appreciated and most difficult-to-teach course in the entire English curriculum. The scope of the course, the lengthy reading assignments, the challenge of helping students to divorce themselves from twentieth-century values and place themselves in another time context--these are but a few of the problems both the students and their professors confront. To suit the changing character of students--yes, and to reach them--we need, on occasion, to alter our approach. Oral interpretation of poetry and prose, by both student and teacher, is the successful medium we use.

After distributing the syllabus and explaining the important part oral interpretation will play in the course, we usually spend the first two weeks working with Chaucer's *Prologue* and demonstrating the oral reading approach. Even the earlier *The Dream of the Rood* is an excellent work to start with. As students hear the dreamer's vision and appreciate the novelty of a tree talking, how much more meaningful the work is to them! Reading the Chaucer passages in Middle English gives the students a feeling for the dialect; recordings by expert readers are suitable substitutes if an instructor feels insecure reading Middle English. Modern renderings of Chaucer in the Penguin or Barron's editions are also appropriate, though, and give the students a feeling for sound qualities in poetry and what is lost by "translation."[1] It is best, perhaps, to limit the amount of Middle English reading to one class meeting in order not to frighten students with the complexities of reading aloud. The modern rendering of Chaucer's verse emphasizes the dramatic qualities of the *Prologue* and the *Tales*.

When using the method in the second half of the survey, appropriate poems are *The Tables Turned* or *We are Seven*; even some of Blake's *Songs* would be suitable. One student whose voice suggests innocence might read "The Lamb," conveying its emotion without sentimentality; another student, possibly even a mature adult, might read "The Tyger" and suggest its energetic questioning of experience. "London" also lends itself to oral reading wherein the student captures the drama of the speaker's solitary walk, the woeful sounds and the pathetic sights of the city at night. Robert Burns' Scottish dialect often reminds us of the difficulty we had the *first* semester with Chaucer.

We make no attempt to read *everything* to our students, nor are they asked to read every work aloud in class. We take time to cover the historical background and some of the biographical information about the authors, stopping oral interpretation for interpretive comment and inviting student response to the works being read. What is most important about this method is that in oral reading we help students understand *some* things well rather than make a futile attempt to cover large sections of the Norton or Oxford anthologies superficially. A class hour may have twenty or thirty minutes devoted to oral reading, with the remainder devoted to discussion or lecture. The syllabus must be flexible enough to allow for diversity and spontaneity.

But reading aloud to students is not enough. Having given them a feel for reading aloud, we then invite them to read short poems to the class. Of course, they are usually shy and reticent at first; nearly every class has one or two brash volunteers, though. Their readings may at first be unanimated, but the act of reading to the rest of the students eventually draws everyone out and creates in the class a sense of community. Some may distrust the novelty of this approach at first, possibly inhibited by their upbringing to avoid public displays of emotion. After two or three meetings, we begin to assign poems ahead of time for students to bring to class prepared to read. Selecting a particular poem for the class to prepare or singling out individual students, inviting them to prepare a poem, are alternate approaches. As each student reads, we comment on his reading, giving a good, average, or fair evaluation instead of a letter grade, because this early practice is preliminary work for the major out-of-class assignment for the semester--the student's production of an oral reading tape.

The oral reading project actually consists of two parts. First, the student submits a written paper, using no more than three secondary sources. This paper includes a short biography of the writer and how that biographical information contributes to understanding the work, as well as to the oral interpretation of the poem or prose piece. He next writes a brief interpretation of the work. Then he must justify why he chose the particular selection for oral interpretation, why he found it so appropriate; a recent student wrote just such a justification:

> Donne's "The Expostulation"
>
> I agree with Donne's philosophy of love. I believe that it is very easy to love someone. We love many people throughout our lives, but it is only through sharing and giving of ourselves to another person that we can truly learn to love someone more than we love ourselves. This kind of love takes a lot of hard work, patience, and--as John Donne says--it is truly an art.
>
> In my reading I tried to show the four different emotions or attitudes of the author. The poem begins with Donne in a state of confusion and bewilderment. He has been hurt, and feels that all women are evil and think little of the vows they made. I try to express these feelings in my voice throughout the first section. In the second section, the writer's attitude changes, and he decides to proclaim the undying faithfulness of the lover. He makes many statements about nature, and compares them to his love. I tried to be the forgiving lover, and I wanted to speak clear and slow, so that the audience could catch each phrase about nature that he used to illustrate his point. The next section of the poem is full of anger and this is expressed quite clearly in each of the curses. I tried to make each individual curse seem just as horrible as the next, and portray the writer's extreme hatred for this man. The last section of the poem was the easiest to read, because it expresses some of my own feelings about love. Therefore, I tried to read it as

> though I really meant it. Also, when Donne is trying to convince her that courting is really not necessary, because love is like a disease, I tried to imagine John Donne, and I'm sure he probably did believe that such things were just a waste of time. Since Donne was trying to sound convincing, he would have spoken softly and gently to his love, so that she would have been charmed and overcome by his words. Thus, I too tried to sound convincing when I spoke the last lines of the poem.
>
> --Marsha Melton

While the student has misinterpreted Donne's poem, she does offer a convincing justification for her opinion and a basically sound approach to her oral interpretation.

Finally, the student reads the poem or prose piece either in the teacher's office or onto a cassette tape, explaining at the end of the oral reading how the interpretation of the work affected the style of delivery. Most teachers will be surprised how many students have access to cassette tapes at home, work, or through a friend. Most school or city libraries have audio visual equipment, and it is a simple matter to make arrangements prior to the beginning of the class with the librarian to accommodate those few students who do not have access to equipment. Many students seem to prefer using the cassette equipment to reading aloud in the teacher's office. With the cassette one can practice and rehearse by recording and erasing; while reading spontaneously in the teacher's office, however, the student may feel threatened.

The benefits of this method are numerous. The assignment reinforces composition and research skills learned in the freshman courses and exposes the student to library research. But more important, it provides an additional benefit: it gives him the opportunity to express emotions, as well as thoughts, creatively. Through reading aloud, he begins to develop an understanding of poetry--its sound and rhythm--and an appreciation for the rhetoric of the English sentence, the balance, the pauses, the importance of punctuation, indeed all of the highly self-conscious artistry that poetry and prose require of the creative artist. How much more meaningful this is to a student, how it transcends all our talk about iambics and alliteration and periodic sentences and catachresis!

And yet, this is a balanced approach, one that is clearly in touch with students today. At each class the teacher is able to get some idea about the student's level of comprehension, especially as he listens to the reader stumble over passages. Thus, daily the teacher is reminded of the lack of sophistication in the student and is better able to resist the temptation to become overly subtle in his approach to the material. Certainly, students better understand material hearing it, in some cases, a second time after having read it to themselves at home. Indeed, we often gain fresh insights from their readings! Weekly tests may be necessary evils, however, to make sure they are reading. The oral reading method does not slight the intellectual and analytical. In fact, it encourages students to ask critical questions in class, to query their classmates about why a line sounded the way it did, to offer alternate readings with different emphases. The midterm examination and the traditional final--or even the creative final described in the September 1975 issue of College English--help test the analytical abilities of the student.

The oral reading method, however, tries to foster, rather than test, the student's appreciation of literature and to develop his aesthetic responses which are only partially discovered on examinations. Of course, this oral reading method encourages the student's emotive responses to literature.

A number of years ago, working in a public library in Austin, Texas, one of the writers of this study devoted much of his energy to creative writing and to organized poetry readings. Perhaps the most striking feature about these poetry readings, however, was that only a few English majors from local universities, such as U. T. Austin and St. Edwards, attended--especially few when compared to journalism and music majors. For a long time he pondered why this was true; the answer came slowly.

Most professors of literature have been trained to approach a work of art according to a model derived from the sciences. The poetry, short story, play--no matter which genre--is the sample, the data to be analyzed, to be reduced and categorized. Just as the scientist removes the sample from its normal context into the laboratory, so the professor of literature, in his graduate training and reading of the New Critics, is taught to remove the sample of literature from its historical and biographical contexts in order to analyze only the "text." The objective, value-free determination of the author's meaning is the end of such criticism, much as the chemist learns to break down certain complex chemicals into their component molecules. This approach worked well for teachers during the sixties, when many students seemed to view literature as containers for ideas. But now, something else is needed; it is time to move beyond such a distorted view of literature, to recognize that a poem or a play is not an "object" to be analyzed in the manner of the scientist. A poem is more than lines of iambic tetrameter, four personifications, a sustained metaphor; a prose selection is more than a series of sonorous effects and contrived syntactical arrangements--a collection of gimmicks to be discovered for the teacher's delight.

Literary works share a special uniqueness; to accept this uniqueness, one must restore to one's mental outlook attitudes which tend to be suspect in the house of reason we all, as English teachers, work in. One must be ready to admit that "I feel" is as important to the discovery of truth as "I think"; that "I imagine" or "I intuit" is as important as "I deduce from logical analysis." Note that we say "as important." Dismissing close textual analysis--a useful tool in understanding literary works--would be irresponsible.

For such a class as we envision, a special syllabus of reading assignments in terms of their suitability for reading aloud is appropriate, but some pieces which do not lend themselves to this method must also be a part of the syllabus. A combination of both types of works exposes the student to the literary variety of the survey course. Some material, such as Pope's Dunciad or Smart's Song to David, contain too many obscure allusions, indeed demand footnotes for full appreciation by contemporary students. By contrast, however, the first canto of Rape of the Lock is a fine vehicle for oral reading; the humor, the word play, the irony, the charming images--most of these our students can visualize and appreciate more fully when they hear the words read expressively. The fact that one piece *does* lend itself to successful oral presentation while another *does not*, of course, need not necessarily imply that one is superior to the other. One would not argue that *The Mill on the Floss* is an inferior literary work to Dickens' *Hard Times* or *Our Mutual Friend* solely on the basis that Dickens' works lend themselves to effective oral presentation while Eliot's works do not. (The editors of the *Norton Anthology of English Literature* discuss this point.) Such short lyric poems as Jonson's "To Celia" or Herrick's "Upon Julia's Clothes"; the drama of Donne's "The Flea" or Browning's "Porphyria's Lover"; parts of Gray's "Elegy" or Godsmith's "Deserted Village"--all of these are typical examples of successful vehicles for oral reading. Discovering the relative suitability of these various works for oral presentation is an interesting literary problem for students to resolve and deal with critically--both in class and possibly in preparing their cassettes.

In order to restore the vitality of literature, we must read prose and poetry aloud, speaking it from our hearts, recapturing it from the past and the printed page, that veritable museum of past centuries we call the textbook. Spoken aloud, the prose and poetry can obtain that perilous balance of heart and mind, become more than a specimen to be analyzed, a crossword puzzle whose meaning must be dug out, often to the utter boredom of the class. The Caedmon series of spoken arts, as well as numerous other recordings produced by other record companies, can be incorporated into a reading aloud approach to sophomore English. As a final note, we might also mention the Public Broadcasting Series "Anyone for Tennyson?" This series indicates a reviving interest in the oral presentation of literature within the television audience. Why not within the classroom?

NOTES

1. Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Canterbury Tales*, trans. Nevill Coghill (Baltimore: Penguin, 1960); Vincent F. Hopper, trans. *Chaucer's Canterbury Tales* (Woodbury: Barron's Educational Series, Inc., 1970).

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CREATIVE COMMUNICATIONS: SEVERAL CLASSROOM APPROACHES

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Every child has natural imaginative acting ability which, if nurtured, can help him improve his language use, understand concepts and relate to his environment. We can capitalize upon this in the English class to make language learning more interesting for all the students and give needed practice in oral communication skills. Through creative speech and drama activities, children learn to organize and express feelings and ideas, to describe, explain and persuade, to create through improvisation and to expand and experiment with vocabulary. As students become more skilled in oral communication, their writing, reading and listening skills improve because oral language is so basic to these.

It would be ideal to start these creative speech and drama activities in the kindergarten and use them progressively through the school years. The ones suggested here can be adapted for almost any level according to the experience the students have had. Start with pantomime and body movement for basic expression. Children can act out animals, occupations, sports, use of objects, emotions or means of travel. New vocabulary can be introduced and expanded upon as the game proceeds. Body movement and facial expressions are important elements of our language and can be practiced through these exercises. Older students can pantomime multi-person situations or famous people or events they have read about to improve their comprehension.

In studying the mechanics of language and semantics, pantomime can be used to demonstrate antonyms, rhyming words, homonyms, compound words, parts of speech or proverbs and figurative language. More lasting impressions will result from this multi-sensory approach. All the class can benefit as they try to guess the chosen words or phrases, causing some brain-stretching. Cards can be made up with pictures or words on them for ready activities to be used when you have a few extra minutes and want to reinforce a concept. Once the students are involved and overcome initial inhibitions, they look forward to doing pantomimes with eagerness and the language lesson becomes an exciting one. Even the very shy child can usually express himself comfortably in this non-verbal activity.

Improvisations can help students understand characterization, story line, plot, climax and other elements of writing. Start with scenes from stories the class has read or you have read to them. How well they will understand the personality, feelings and trials of Helen Keller or the sequence of events in Charlie and the Chocolate Factory when they dramatize! Romeo and Juliet or Hats for Sale can come alive and capture the interest of the students when roles are enacted. Then let them improvise stories they have written or dictated to you. Using the children's own work creates a real incentive for further creative writing. No memorization or scripts are necessary as dialogue is made up on the spot. The improvisation can be very spontaneous in the English class when the students or the teacher find a suitable scene.

The teacher can narrate some of the story to keep it moving as the students provide action and dialogue. Older students may not need this help. After the scene, it is helpful to evaluate the process. The teacher can offer comments such as "John really walked and sounded like an old man," or ask questions like "How can we improve this scene?" or "Which character could you really believe?" After the discussion a second cast can replay the story. Usually less verbal children feel secure in volunteering to play the story after seeing the first version.

Nursery rhymes, fairy tales, Aesop's fables, poetry, fiction, history, biography, news stories or even melodrama can be used as source material. Book reports can be enlivened by letting two students dramatize part of the story to be shared. These scenes with costumes and props can be given for other classes or parents for an interesting assembly.

Dramatic activity should not be reserved for the once or twice yearly class play or unit on drama. Nor should the most verbal students be given the important roles, as so often happens, for the purpose is not performance for an audience but growth of the children. Children learn language by using it--often and in many interactive situations. They should be given many opportunities in the English class.

Writing and delivering commercials and newscasts of sports, weather, world and school events are good communication experiences. Giving impromptu commercials about books or interesting objects helps students to think and compose on their feet. To further integrate oral and written language, the students can give on-the-spot descriptions or interviews they have created with characters like Lindbergh, Columbus, Carter or characters from books. They can also prepare demonstration speeches on subjects like building models, coloring Easter eggs or doing magic tricks. These subjects can be on cards which are drawn at random for surprise talks, too. The use of a video-tape machine can enhance the experience as the students see their presentations on instant replays.

The class can plan, write and produce television or radio shows similar to "What's My Line?", "You are There," "Radio Mystery Theater" or "Galloping Gourmet." This format offers small group discussion, research and planning experience, as well as writing and dramatization.

Story telling is an art which involves memory, sequencing, characterization, new vocabulary and expressive language skills. Enunciation, pitch, volume and inflection and use of visual aids can be improved as students tell stories. They can rehearse before a small group of fellow students to get constructive feedback on their presentations. Because younger audiences within the school are usually very appreciative, appearing before them can build the storyteller's confidence in his communicative ability. Making up the narration for a filmstrip or View Master reel also involves practice in composing, sequencing and speaking.

Puppetry can also help students practice language skills. Scripts can be written and skits performed providing learning and enjoyment for all. Using puppets, students can even teach their peers lessons on grammar skills or give book reports.

Making an 8mm movie or slide show to illustrate an original oral report or story is a valuable learning experience. A sound track with dialogue and sound effects can be prepared by the students to syncronize with the film. There are usually parents who would be willing to help out with the activity and provide a movie camera if one is not available at school. Have a film festival!

The English teacher can lead students to use their imaginations and improve their communication skills by offering creative speech and drama activities. Extra time and planning may be involved but the student enthusiasm and growth that results is rewarding and satisfying.

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ESTABLISHING AN APPROPRIATE CLIMATE FOR ROLE PLAYING

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The teacher who undertakes to bring role playing into the classroom needs first to be comfortable and familiar with the process before involving students in it. Such familiarity can be gained from working with other teachers who have used role playing successfully or by attending workshops in creative dramatics where techniques for role playing are usually taught.

But simply knowing the techniques is not quite enough. Because role playing allows students to explore their feelings about situations in real life as well as in literature, care must be taken to maintain a non-threatening environment in the classroom before, during, and after role playing activity. The following principles can help teachers using role playing to make certain that students will feel free to become involved and to react to their playing.

1. Respect for the non-volunteer must be maintained.

Our own enthusiasm for an idea or activity is not necessarily shared by everyone else. Not every student is going to be excited about role playing, particularly in the beginning. Such response is quite natural and should be accepted without comment. In most cases, if emphasis is placed on using group playings instead of individual enactments, most students will participate. The gradual development of confidence through preparatory activities and exercises will also encourage the reluctant student to join in. At no time, however, should students be forced to participate in an activity to which they clearly feel unequal. Provide alternatives instead such as becoming part of a crowd in the distance, serving as a mute character instead of a speaking one, or becoming the person in charge of setting a scene.

2. Be accepting and nonjudgmental of students' efforts.

Role playing in the classroom is not meant to be perfect theatre. During and after role playing, students may be corrected on a factual level if absolutely necessary, but no right or wrong interpretations of roles actually exist. The teacher may volunteer a view of the situation, but this is to be labeled as simply an opinion and not offered in any sense as a final solution. Part of the reward in role playing is the examination of various roles and the reaction and evaluation which take place. Questions may arise about possible solutions to the problem, but an individual's interpretation should never be directly criticized. In most cases, if a role play seems to have missed the point of the problem, re-enactment by others usually rectifies the oversight, and students perceive the difference. Handling such problems in this manner bypasses embarrassment for individuals, which, if allowed, might discourage them from participating in future role playing.

3. Participants in role playing should be encouraged to act honestly.

Part of the purpose in role playing is for students to try out new roles, to explore possible behavior and to feel how someone else might feel in a situation. At first it may be very difficult for students to relax sufficiently to completely enter their roles. If the teacher can sense this is a problem, questions should be directed toward the feeling of the role as the role behavior: "How do you think the character would feel at this moment? How can you describe the feeling inside of you at this time?" Occasionally role playing calls for the portrayal of stereotypes, but as much as possible, emphasis should go toward creating individualistic roles and responses, drawing upon the players' instincts and feelings as well as knowledge. To encourage honesty, the teacher must become an expert listener, and an alert viewer of nonverbal signals.

4. Role playing does have limits and they should be observed.

Certain roles and certain problem situations may be too controversial or too emotion-laden for some students to handle; pushing into these areas when students exhibit signs of unusual aggression, uneasiness or frustration simply invites difficulties. In some instances, a role problem may be beyond the reach of students. They will not have sufficient knowledge or empathy to develop an effective enactment. If this happens, the teacher should quickly stop any action and re-adjust the focus to a level where success can be obtained. Doing this quickly but firmly reassures students that they are still operating in a non-threatening environment where the person risk-taking is kept to a minimum.

5. Role playing needs to be tied to adolescent concerns and expectations.

Although specific subject matter often forms the core of a role playing situation, discussion should relate the enactment to student concerns and social issues whenever possible. The teacher encourages diversity of response and application by occasionally playing the devil's advocate in discussion sessions. Sometimes it can become too easy for students to avoid examining all sides of an issue or problem as well as their own positions in connection with the role playing situation. Hence, for role playing to have any lasting effect on attitudes, beliefs, and behavior, it must be reality-centered.

Role playing is a complex process; it does not consist of merely starting in and doing anything that comes to mind. Effective role playing focuses upon handling details and issues which lead to the definition of a problem, then tentative decision-making in the selection among alternatives of action, then experiencing the consequences of these choices. When it is properly used, role playing permits an effective kind of discovery learning. Following the guidelines outlined above will help to establish a climate in which most students will feel free to respond, to explore, and to assess issues and problems which are of concern to them in their everyday lives.

WHERE ARE YOU COMING FROM? WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

(Some Applications of Transactional Analysis in Speech and Drama)

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Possibly the hardest thing for all of us to learn as we made the passage from toddler to teen was what to say and when to say it. Figuring out how to be yourself, either when sending a message or interpreting one, is both an art and a skill often overlooked in secondary English instruction. The intent of this paper, then, is to suggest to secondary English, speech, and drama classes, ways of using elements of the currently-popular theory called "Transactional Analysis."

Where are You Coming From?

Transactional Analysis, or T.A. was created by the late Dr. Eric Berne partly to explain how personality is conveyed through verbal and non-verbal messages. In his view, we all have a "parent" who criticizes or nurtures; a "child" who plays, adapts or rebels; and an "adult" who processes fact or makes tentative conclusions. From one of these three voices or "ego states," we all come whenever we communicate, so the theory proposes. Not that this is so difficult to comprehend, as most intuitive people know. We all have equated haughty condescension with parent figures; fantasy, obstinacy or shrewd compliance with childhood; and, responsible unbiased calculation with adulthood. The value in T.A. is that it provides a complete system for understanding where people come from, as well as resourceful strategies for avoiding both the receiving and the sending of unproductive communications.

For teachers to use such a theory requires only minimal instruction time, so quickly do school kids perceive how this theory explains the practice of communicative "transactions." As an initiatory exercise, for instance, a speech class might study a facsimile of the illustrated chart below, after having heard the teacher introduce T.A., perhaps using comments similar to those in the preceding paragraph.

CLUES TO WHERE YOU'RE COMING FROM

"CRIITICAL PARENT" VERBAL	"CRITICAL PARENT" NON-VERBAL
You must do this.	clenched jaw
You have to do that.	furrowed brow
You need to watch that.	wrinkled nose
You're supposed to be this way.	head tilted to one side
You always act stupid.	pointing finger
You ought to behave.	pounding fist on palm or table
You're stupid (dumb)!	arms folded on chest
That's ridiculous!	shoulders hunched square
How disgusting!	feet widely apart
You're so lazy!	cross-legged seating
What an immature idea!	foot-tapping

Never do that again!	sighs
You're not _______________!	
Now what?	

"NURTURING PARENT"	"NURTURING PARENT"
Let me help you.	pat on head
Let me do it.	pat on back
Poor thing (child, dear).	arm around shoulder
There, there.	eyebrows slanted
It's okay, honey.	
Sonny, you	grasping hand

ADULT	ADULT
Perhaps, we could . . .	eyes fixed on audience
Comparatively, this is . . .	head evenly set
I think that . . .	eyebrows, lips even
I see what . . .	eyes blink in regular moderate pace
How much does (is) . . .?	hand strokes chin
When did (is) . . .?	fingers interlaced supporting chin (palms down)
Is it true?	
Why/how did . . .?	
It's probable that . . .	
In what way does . . .?	
Isn't that unknown?	

ADAPTED CHILD	ADAPTED CHILD
When I grow up . . .	raises hand
What do you want me to do?	waits patiently
Did I do okay?	smiles easily
Can you help me?	eyes fixed on "parent"
When can I?	down-cast eyes
Let me go?	hands behind back
Please?	sways side to side
	quivering lips
	bites nails

REBEL CHILD	REBEL CHILD
I won't do it!	furrowed brow
I don't care!	wrinkled nose
I hate . . .!	whining tone
You can't make me!	protruding lower lip
Get out (away)!	clenched teeth
Mine's better.	shrugged or hunched shoulders
	fist clenched
	tears--cries easily
	pouts or has tantrums

FREE CHILD

I wish . . .
I want . . .
I'm gonna . . .
I guess . . .
My _____ is bigger.
My _____ is best.
Watch me (notice me).
Yuk!
Eech!
Stinks!
Crap!
Groovy, cool
Wow! Right on!

FREE CHILD

laughter
teasing look
constant motion
stands on one foot, tucks other behind
curls up in chair

As follow up, the teacher can mime some of the body language listed on the chart, requiring students to identify where he or she is coming from, while mugging the various facial and gestural signals associated with the three voices of our personalities.

Next the teacher should add verbal messages to the body language, again requiring students to identify the appropriate ego-state voice behind the message. To complete the activity, the teacher should call for volunteers to demonstrate in front of class coming from one of the three voices. Alternative or extended activities could include role playing the following dialogue excerpts:

SAMPLE TRANSACTIONS

Number 1

Teacher: Class started five minutes ago. Here's your assignment.
Student: I couldn't help it; the bus was late.

Number 2

Eddy: Whaddya wanna do, Frank?
Frank: How about some trail riding?

Number 3

Mr. Watson: Sit down, young man, and be quiet!
Eddy: Who do you think you are, telling me what to do?

Number 4

Student: I ain't learning nothing in your class.
Teacher: What do you think you should do about it?

Number 5

Student: What time is it, Mr. Schwarz:
Mr. Schwarz: You're always in such a hurry!

Number 6

Johnny: What would you do if I told you I had cigarettes in my pocket?
Teacher: If I find anyone with cigarettes, I must turn him into the office according to the rules.

Number 7

Teacher: How are you doing on your reports?
Alice: Not so good.

Number 8

Kim: Why don't you come over tonight and help me with my homework?
Jack: If I come over, we won't get much homework done.

Number 9

Nick: Let me use your car, and I'll bring you back a joint.
Jerry: You haven't got a license and joints are illegal. No.

Number 10

Mother: Why don't you do an oral report?
Pete: H-h-how d-d-do you expect s-s-someone with a stutter t-t-to do an oral report?

Each of the ten mini-dialogues listed may suggest two interpretations about where the players are coming from, judged according to the body language and vocal intonations reviewed in the first chart. Number 1, for example, could be interpreted as an adult teacher (if spoken in controlled monotone with no body language) being responded to by an adult student (if spoken the same way). Or the same exchange could be interpreted as a "critical parent teacher" addressing and being responded to by a "rebel child" if the teacher speaks sarcastically, stressing "started" and pointing a finger; and if the student responds with a whining voice, stressing "I" and "bus" and shrugging shoulders dejectedly. A similar pair of role exchanges could be rendered in numbers 4, 6, 7, and 10--if the Adult versions ential controlled voice and limited body language, while the Parent-child versions involve a loud, condescending voice and whiny, pitiable voice, coupled with appropriate body language.

Number 5 is different, however, in that Mr. Schwarz's response can be either a laughing Adult observation or a sharp Critical Parent retort. Likewise Number 8 can be rendered as Child to Child if flirtations, sing-song voices are coupled with smiles and raised eyebrows. Or Jack could respond as Adult, if he controls voice and gesture. Number 9 depends exclusively on whether "Nick" comes across as an authoritarian and demanding or as a hurrying and playful person.

What Does It Mean?

Though not radically unconventional, the preceding exercises are systematic. And it is just this system approach that makes the T.A. technique so very helpful to the teacher of communication or speech.

When an authoritarian "critical parent" speaks, it usually addresses a "rebel child." When a "nurturing parent" speaks, it is usually consoling a "hurt child." And when an "adult" speaks, it usually addresses another "adult." These are the predictable, compatible transactions, meaning that people communicating in these ways are on the same wavelength.

However, when a "critical parent" receives a "critical parent" response, or when the "adult" receives a "critical parent" response, there is a "crossing transaction." In brief, this means that the harmony of being on the same wavelength has been disrupted, and that some disharmonious communications will follow.

At this point, recall that transactions are meant to be compatible, parallel and harmonious according to T.A. precepts. The principle is simply that real sharing of feelings, ideas, and just getting on with living can only be accomplished if transactions are straight. Crooked or crossing transactions set up kindred feelings of anger, fear, unhappiness or gloating, all of which are "child" states that get in the way of "adult" information processing and personal growth.

Teachers can insert a couple of T.A. modifications into normal debate procedure. For example, after setting up the classroom seats as a circle within a circle, the teacher has each debater, seated in the inner circle, draw from a hat a role to play in the ensuing debate over some provocative topic. After each inner-circle participant has spoken his or her piece, the outer-circle observers try to name the role played by each of the inner-circle debaters. Usually, the heat of the contest causes some of the debaters to forget the roles and speak from their own ego-state voice. This transfer of voices will be brought out in the discussion between observers and participants, as they recount their changes in attitude resulting in similar changes in strategies.

Variations of this exercise provide almost endless ways of getting students to focus on verbal and nonverbal clues which demonstrate the attitude of the speaker. For instance, each observer can be asked to write a list of specific statements, tones of voice, facial expressions, or body gestures that characterized the strong and weak arguments. Such lists could be subsequently discussed in class, and the commonly shared notions of sound argument could become the substance of a composition on that topic. Another writing assignment evolves from assigning to small groups of three or four students the task of preparing a script for an argument delivered completely from one of the ego-state voices, complete with allverbal and nonverbal clues. The group then elects one of its members to play the script in front of the class. The subjects used in all debate exercises should be provocative enough to involve students, but yet not so far from their own experiences that the debate won't provide an opportunity for each one to clarify his own attitudes. Here are some samples:

Mannerisms that bug you.
Things men and women should discuss before marriage.
The best teacher you have had.
The fairest person you know.
The best salesman you've ever dealt with.
Reasons for parent-child communications breakdown.
Ways to eliminate boredom.

Once the class has demonstrated its general ability to identify where the speaker is coming from and has found agreement on which transactions seem best for debate, it's time to begin the same analysis of communications in the everyday world. "What does television programming suggest about how networks feel about viewers?" "Where are most advertisers coming from and what does it say about how they feel about consumers?" "Are the transactions between politicians and constituents 'crooked'?" "How can you tell?" And finally, "where are you coming from when you talk to parents or teachers?" Is there anything you can do to improve these transactions?

Answers to these questions involve "ulterior transactions" and "games," two further concepts of T.A. that are very helpful to students learning human communication skills. "Ulterior transactions" occur when nonverbal and verbal language do not match up. For example, consider the following:

> T.V. advertisement: (with solemn-faced, gray-haired man in conservative suit, speaking in controlled monotone voice). "Here in Washington they have set up a panel to investigate pain relievers, and have found that aspirin alone offers relief from most pain."

This sounds like Adult addressing Adult, a "facts-about-pain relievers" statement. But the ulterior message implies a disguised parent saying "when the seat of government is involved with anything you should listen and obey." Actually the pronoun "they" without antecedent could mean anyone accidentally in Washington doing aspirin research, but the picture of the Senate Office Building in the background and the subtly Adult posture of the speaker are calculated to suggest an adult-adult transaction, instead of a parent-child transaction, in fact the most frequent advertiser-consumer transaction.

In a similar view, review all of the now comic political transactions of the Watergate era:

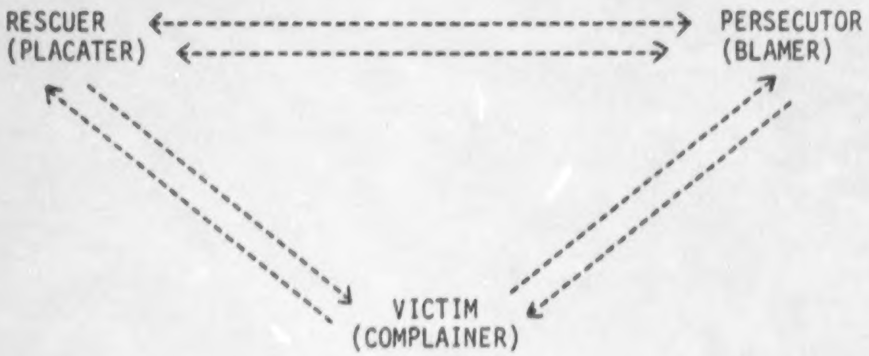
> President: "Let me make one thing perfectly clear." (Finger wagging, brow furrowed and voice loudly commanding through a clenched jaw).
>
> Literal transaction: Adult-Adult "Let's communicate."
>
> Ulterior transaction: Parent-Child "You kids better listen to me or you'll be sorry."

Or a typical transaction between parents and teenagers can exemplify the point:

> Daughter: "Daddy, our driver's ed. teacher told us that old cars like mine are deathtraps." (Softly, sing-song voice, smiling and eyebrows raised).
>
> Literal transaction: Adult-Adult "Here are some unsettling facts."

Ulterior transaction: Child-Parent "Make me happy and safe in a new car, Daddy."

Beyond the ulterior transaction, and closely related to it, is the "game." According to T.A. Theory, a game is subconscious and deteriorates the purposes of human communication (Steiner, 1975, p. 112). More simply, a psychological game fixes its participants in a transactional triangle, in which the roles and role-changes are tightly-prescribed manipulations and reactions. Note how this can be illustrated in the following diagram by Karpman (1975):



As a "victim," one "game player" most frequently begins by sending out "help me" messages to a "rescuer." Sometime after he has attracted the rescuer to his plight, however, the victim switches roles and becomes the persecutor, a necessary step in games. Though these are subtle changes, they can be easily seen by students when the messages and switches are thought of as "moves," the "winning" is thought of as making the other person assume the desired role (victim, rescuer, persecutor), and "losing" is thought of as being forced into such a role.

As an instance, have students recall if a friend (victim) ever drew them into an argument as a third person (rescuer), only to have the friend say, "stay out of this (persecutor), I don't really need your help" (victim). Or ask them if they have ever really laid into someone in a fit of anger (persecutor); only to draw back when they realized how their anger affected the other person (rescuer); then to have that person (persecutor) proceed to lecture them (victim) severely about nastiness.

Such common situations, arise from the heat of dramatic feelings associated with "hurt child" (victim), "nurturing parent" (rescuer), or "critical parent" (persecutor). As such they are critically important postures for the young speech student to become aware of, for they offer nothing more than a pointless running around of the game triangle, not unlike a base runner who circles the bags but never touches home.

Student exercises deriving from games are largely explorations of themselves or others in argumentive postures. Ask them to identify victim, rescuer or persecutor roles the last time they had a heated exchange and bad feelings ensued with anyone else. Or ask them to examine exchanges between Archie Bunker, Edith, Meathead and Gloria, for instance, or any other T.V. family situation. In discussion, try to get them to discover the go-nowhere futility in such games and ask them how to stop the game. If they don't respond, point out that adult-adult transactions rely on legitimate questions and on facts, not feelings, to solve problems. Ask them if they can replace being "blamers," "placaters," or "complainers" with being active-listeners, fact-processors, or opinion-offerers. In these ways they might grasp the process of identification rhetoric as opposed to opposition rhetoric.

Conclusion

T.A. in the classroom is a supplement to the keen intuition and common sense of the teacher. Certainly, however, the notions of compatible, crossing, and ulterior transactions combined with psychological "games" afford a system to enhance students' exploratory studies of where people come from and why. Moreover, certain inadvertent lessons about communication of one's personality may be learned. For example, the parent, both critical and nurturing, is an absolute necessity in situations where parent-child transactions are expected, such as homes or schools. Further, it is wonderful to have an active child, for in the child reside spontaneity, feelings, and playful creativity. But one should examine carefully overdoing either parent or child communications at the expense of the more self-enhancing adult communications. Though not a panacea, T.A. most assuredly can be a high-interest method of alerting students to the subtle interrelationships of message-sending and message-receiving as they affect attitudes and behavior. If these things are grasped more readily by this approach, the job of the teacher of rhetoric or speech is thereby made more enjoyable.

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A SEXUAL VALUES WEEK

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As teachers we know that communication often breaks down because of the mental and emotional filters we use to make pieces of information more palatable. With no single area of inquiry are these filters more potent than with sexual roles and topics. Because I often teach novels that touch on these sexual themes, I have prepared a four-hour "sexual values week" that precedes discussion of works that might create reactions like embarrassment, shame, premature moral judgment and fear. And these works are widely taught in high schools and colleges: The Scarlet Letter, Catcher in the Rye, Rubyfruit Jungle, Lady Chatterly's Lover, and One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest. These four exercises could be used with discretion by any teacher at any level if they were adapted to the students' readiness.

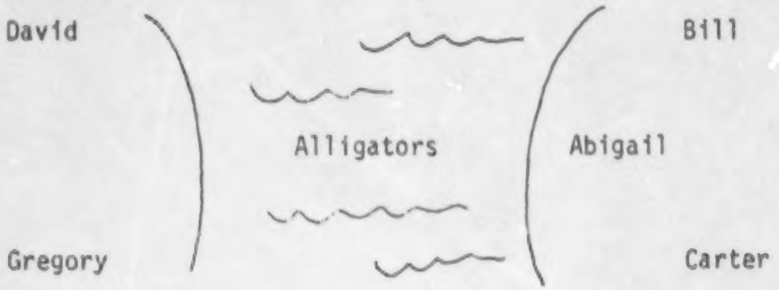
1. What bugs you about the opposite sex? In this 30-50 minute exercise, divide the class into two groups, one male, and the other female. Ask each group to share those gripes they have about persons of the opposite sex. Suggest one for each side to start things off: Males are often insensitive to feelings; females cry too much and use tears to manipulate. These discussions can get very lively! When everyone has had a chance to sound off, bring the two groups back together, lining the males up on one side of the room facing the lined up females (all seated). Starting with either group, ask each person in a line to state one gripe. If dialogue between the sexes is provoked you can let it go on, though not for so long that everyone doesn't get a chance to speak out. When all are through presenting, guide the discussion to a recognition of what stereotypes are, and of what social conditioning can do to us in terms of sexual roles (a woman can become a fine engineer, a man a good writer). If more time is available, each side could put together a short improvisation, dramatizing a situation one person has described. The teacher can then ask the class to analyze what happened in the play. (The idea for this exercise comes from the annual NCTE conference in Philadelphia some years ago.)

2. Androgyny Scale: This is a widely used technique that can still be an eye opener. Put 20 adjectives like the following on the board:

1. self-reliant
2. yielding
3. definite in beliefs
4. cheerful
5. independent
6. dependent
7. athletic
8. shy
9. assertive
10. affectionate
11. decisive
12. loyal
13. forceful
14. sympathetic
15. aggressive
16. sensitive
17. dominant
18. compassionate
19. analytical
20. tender

On a scale from 1 - 7, eacn student rates him(her)self, where 1 is low and 7 high. Since the odd-numbered items are generally those our society considers masculine, and the even ones feminine, have the students add up the odd and even answers. With older and/or more confident students, the ranges and frequencies of scores can be put on the board and discussed. Raise questions like the following: Is it fair to call certain adjectives "masculine," others "feminine"? Is a female who has many "male" characteristics wrong? deviant? a homosexual? or simply more developed in diverse interests than most of her peers? Who is free? My purpose here is to stress that we all share in various human qualities and restricting ourselves to our sexual role stereotypes cuts us off from our truer, fuller nature.

3. "Alligator River Exercise": I participated in this and the previous exercise at a conference at the University of Michigan for teachers, social workers and counselors. The alligator exercise also appears in Simon, Howe, and Kirschenbaum's Values Clarification (Hart Publishing Co.). On the board draw this diagram:



Then tell the students this story: Abigail is in love with David and they plan to marry. She knows of no other way to cross the Alligator River than by boat, and Carter has the only boat around. She asks Carter if she can use the boat. He says sleep with me first. Abigail goes to her father Bill for his advice. Bill tells her to do what she thinks is best. Abigail sleeps with Carter and travels to David. She then tells David what she had to do and he rejects her for it. Abigail finally tells Gregory her story; he falls in love with her and beats David up.

Students now are asked to rank the five characters from the one they respected the most to the one least respected, jotting down the basis or grounds for their choices. The teacher then leads a discussion on these choices: Who did you put first and why? Who did you rank last? Why? Where did your attitudes come from? Are they your own? Primarily those of your parents?

An interesting twist with this exercise is to change the sexes of all characters, so Abigail becomes Arthur; Bill, Bea; Carter, Cathy; David, Delila; and Gregory, Gertrude. Again, tell the story, after which students rank all five. Is there a double standard? Was what Arthur did more "okay"? Was Cathy's behavior out of her proper sexual conduct?

At least three broad issues are raised here: 1. How can a parent be most helpful? 2. Is intercourse immoral? (Simon et al. present a G-rated version where Carter asks Abigail to steal a transistor radio for him); and 3. Do the means justify the ends?

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF WILL SHAKESPEARE

Joy Miller, Circleville High School, Circleville, Ohio

Drama in my ninth grade English classroom comes alive for the students through their own active participation. We usually save this study of theatre until the last six weeks. I like to "teach Shakespeare" around April 23rd, the Bard's birthday. This gives me a good excuse to throw a birthday party in his honor. In the past I have baked cupcakes for the class, placing a raisin in one and giving a prize of some sort to the "winner" (receiver of the raisin). This activity closely parallels a game often played at social gatherings in Shakespeare's day. And, one can imagine the popularity of such an example!

For me, the key to success seems to be in getting and keeping the students involved. We take an all-encompassing approach, starting with the Greek theatre beginnings of 3,000 years ago. We talk about amphitheaters, Greek gods, the origin of "comedy" and "tragedy," and find out that Thespis was the first actor (hence, the National Thespian Organization of student actors and actresses today) and that Chorgeus was the first guy to dance. (We see "choreography" on T.V. programs every day.)

Turning away from the Greeks, we move rather rapidly ahead in time as we jump to the period of William Shakespeare. We study one of his plays, naturally, but we do much more. We delve into the "popular culture" of the day, too. We find out what Queen Elizabeth I did for sport and recreation, how people were transported in her day, and what foods they liked to eat. We research costumes of that period and learn about the peoples' educational systems. This all results in a thick "Class Book" made up of individual contributions of reports and supplemental drawings. We even have a contest to determine who will design and produce our cover for the edition; students submit "entries" and the class judges which they like best. Others may opt to put together and organize the volume. Students are also asked to pick a scene from the play we have studied and write out comparable modern-day dialogue to replace the Elizabethan language. We have had some hilarious and extremely inventive creations portraying Brutus and Anthony as C.B.er's, Casca and Cassius as if they are on a marijuana trip, and some pretty hip "jive talk" incorporated into some of the scene presentations.

Leaving the Shakespearean scene, we move to modern day theatre. We talk about what actually goes into the production of, say, a Broadway play. More students than not are quite surprised at all of the varied departments of people that must work together for the success of any given production.

We learn about makeup, costume, scene design, lighting, sound effects, and publicity and promotion for a show. After students are given a chance to "get the feel" of each segment, they are asked to choose an area that particularly interests them from all that we have talked of thus far. This, in turn, becomes their six weeks' project and they present some aspect of their chosen area to the class. In the past we have seen "publicity packets" for fictitious shows (this is a portfolio made up by the student to show news releases, tickets, radio and T.V. commercials, advertisement copy, and posters that would publicize the coming of a show); papier-mache comedy and tragedy masks resembling those that symbolize drama; lighting plots for a play; lighting effects demonstrations inside stages constructed by the students; entire puppet shows produced by members of the class (this would include building a puppet stage, making the puppets and costuming them, acting out and writing the puppet play, and perhaps even performing it for elementary audiences); memorized soliloquies; constructed replicas of the Globe Theatre; makeup demonstrations; and costume "fashion shows" of clothing worn during various eras displayed on doll-sized figures.

Before we know it, the end of school has arrived, we have had what seems to have been at least an adequate overview of our subject, and my students and I have had great fun exploring the wonderful world of the theatre. What's more--it has been a most positive experience for all!

. . . .

University Associates in Composition

The University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign invites nominations from Superintendents of School and English Supervisors of outstanding English teachers to come to the University of Illinois during the 1978-79 school year as University Associates in Composition. Nominees should be experienced and should possess, minimally, a master's degree in English or in English Education. School districts should recommend teachers to whom they are willing to grant sabbatical leaves for the full school year at half salary. The University of Illinois will pay the other half of the salary up to a maximum of $10,000. Appointees will teach three sections of Freshman Rhetoric with no more than 22 students to a section during each of their two semesters in residence. They will participate in the Seminar in Composition and may take up to one additional English course each semester, although they will not be required to do so. The purpose of the program is to achieve greater articulation between high school and college English departments and acquaint Associates with recent research findings in the teaching of writing. The teaching internship will be supervised by the rhetoric staff of the University. Tenure will be from August 20, 1978 until May 20, 1979. Nominations should be made as soon as possible and should be sent to Professor Arnold Tibbetts, Director of the Rhetoric Program, 100 English Building, Urbana, IL 61801. An assent agreement from the nominee should accompany each nomination. Nominees should have transcripts of all graduate and undergraduate course work sent to Professor Tibbetts immediately. Selections will be announced on or about May 15.

THE OVERHEAD PROJECTOR AS A GIMMICK

Irene Payan, Ishpeming, Michigan

During the past few years the entire nation has been bombarded with suggestions on how to be entertained, how to find relaxation, how to get the most out of life--all, with the least effort. Consequently, one attitude that prevails in the classroom is that of having fun. If a teacher does not want the students to provide their own diversion (which may be distraction, or even destruction), he has to have a gimmick. His lesson plans must include theatrical props. Thanks to audio-visual aids, in this case the overhead projector, he can become the star of his own show.

The overhead projector can be a powerful dramatic tool. Any change in classroom routine naturally arouses curiosity. The slightest rearrangement of furniture or equipment sharpens the students' attention. Anytime the student is able to see his work as a successful contribution, he is determined to outdo himself. Focusing a student's suggestion on the screen for the rest of the class to see leads to a very dramatic moment. In such a frame of mind, the student becomes perceptive to the lesson. The overhead projector enables each student to realize that his participation is valuable. Thus he becomes more adventurous, more willing, and more informed. During a unit on the short story, through a process of inductive reasoning, with the help of the overhead projector, the students teach themselves how to determine the main character.

Beforehand

In advance, the assignment is given to read a particular short story. This discussion concerns "Susana and the Shepherd" by Margaret Craven. (From the title alone one may surmise that the main character is a moot question.) While reading the selection, the students are to list details that evince how each character . . .

1. talks
2. thinks
3. looks
4. acts
5. establishes a reputation by working with or living among others

To make sure that each student has the opportunity to get involved with the assignment some time should be given to read in class.

In-Class Discussion

On the given day the classroom is prepared. As the students enter, they notice the screen pulled down in the front of the room, and the overhead projector plugged in for action. After the usual hubbub, the teacher begins the discussion by asking for names of the characters. If a student cannot recall a name, an identification is satisfactory. As fast as the students call out their suggestions, they are written on the table of the projector and thus appear enlarged on the screen. This procedure not only forces the students to concentrate, but encourages them to participate. Everyone watches the screen, intent on the story. Since the verbal contributions appear in the spotlight, every student wants to get in on the act. Like no other day of the entire course, this session has everyone eager to participate. Most actually sit on the edge of their seats and lean forward, caught in the frenzy of the activity.

After the names of the characters appear on the screen, the students refer to their notes taken while reading the assignment. (When an overhead projector is in use, the window shades need not be drawn.) The comments of the students on the speech, the ideas, the appearance, the actions, and the reputation of each individual in the story are just as spontaneous as the listing of the characters. For each comment, some kind of mark is made near the name so that the outstanding character really does stand out. Just to be able to have something to say, some students scan the pages of the text. They themselves insist on accuracy. The apathetic student or the non-reader at least pays attention, fascinated by all the activity--most likely for the first time all year. Hopefully, the lesser able student will be able to relate some observations of the discussion to what he watches on television.

Now that the characters and the events of the story are uppermost in the minds of the students, they discuss the following five questions:

1. What is the main problem that forces the events of the story?
2. Who creates this problem?
3. Who is the cause of the problem that forces another character to act or react?
4. Who changes as a result of experiencing this problem?
5. Who touches the lives of all the other characters in the story?

While the answers come, lines are drawn between the names of characters that influence each other. The character who touches every other person in the story soon shows up with the most marks and lines near his name. If two characters seem equally significant, a review of the first four questions resolves all doubts.

As soon as there is agreement about the main character, I place an outline of a star over his name. Immediately there explodes a discussion of movies, probability, universality, and personal experiences. The students volunteer assignments to expound on their personal reactions. The suggestions seem endless. Future assignments include research, reviews of movies, comparisons of stories in books and on film, different versions of the plot or theme having some other character as the main character.

Everyone involved--student, as well as teacher--leaves the classroom with a sense of euphoria, satisfaction with himself for a job well done.

SPEECH AND DRAMA IN THE ENGLISH CLASS

Kenneth Wright, Catalina High School, Tucson

Teaching effective communication, whether written or oral, is a prime responsibility of the English curriculum in any school system. Today, there is a great emphasis on writing skills, perhaps even at the expense of skills necessary for effective speech. The question is how can the two be integrated in the English classroom? It seems as though the two necessarily must be united so that one reinforces the other.

To illustrate, we can logically assume that speech skills are learned far in advance of the prerequisites necessary for written communication: the child learns to speak at an early age. Is it not also logical to assume, then, that not utilizing this foundation for communication as a basis for effective writing is absolutely absurd? Of course it is. Writing is talk written down, and not building upon the skills already established in the home and during the early years in school is like withholding a copy of Gray's Anatomy from the medical student and beginning all over with the fundamental structure of the human body.

For example, students must discern the parallels between punctuation and its speech counterpart: each punctuation mark takes a pause and its own unique change in pitch and, often, change in volume in the spoken word. How basic this idea is and how effective when proofreading one's own written work. To further illustrate, if a student has the opportunity to participate in debate in the English classroom, does it not seem logical to assume that when he is writing a persuasive paper, his organization and content will be more substantial as a result of his debate experience?

One of the rudimentary ideas the student must grasp, however, is that the three functions of thought, speech, and writing, occur at three distinct rates of speed with thought being the most rapid and writing the least. Therefore, it is imperative that the student pace himself so as to allow the thought processes to slow down in order to keep pace with the tongue in speech and, even more rigorous a task, to allow the thoughts to diminish in speed in order to keep pace with the hand in writing. All three processes are integrally linked one with the other, and their combined functions must be held in their proper perspectives in the mind of the student.

But whether we are referring to the spoken or the written word, our primary concern is still the ultimate in teaching--the fostering of logical, substantive thought. This idea is made evident in an article entitled "Teaching Thinking on Paper," in which Professor A. D. Van Nostrand, a Harvard Ph.D. and Freshman Composition instructor at Brown University, states that students' writing problems do not stem from their not being able to phrase a sentence but from their inability to think.[1] It seems all too evident, then, that if we are to foster substantial thought in our youth, we must use all means available to us as educators, and as teachers of English, we must utilize the vehicle of speech in our classrooms as well as that of composition: not to do so deprives the youngster of the opportunity to develop a form of communication he has been familiar with far longer than the medium of the printed word.

A hyperbolic extension of speech in the classroom is the drama. How effective to drive a point home using gesticulation and exaggerated dialogue. Through the use of this art form, the student may see how effective interpretation of the printed page manifests itself in meaningful vocal, facial, and body expression. For example, if the actor does not interpret simple punctuation correctly, as the playwright intended it, the entire tenor and, ultimately, meaning of a line may be lost completely. Shakespeare was aware of punctuation in conveying meaning and tone almost four centuries ago. In A Midsummer Night's Dream, in a prologue to a play before the Duke of Athens, a rustic, obviously unfamiliar with punctuation skills, speaks the following lines: "Consider then, we come but in despite./ We do not come, as minding to content you,/ Our true intent is./ All for your delight,/ We are not here. That you should here repent you,/ . . . ."[2] Our poor bumpkin, lacking in scholastic skills, inadvertently stated the opposite of his intent, and if the Duke, not lacking in scholastic skills, had not a sense of humor, he might have lopped off the head of such a seemingly ingracious performer. We should not flay our students for not taking to heart the basic skills we have taught them, but some day, perhaps, because of an inadvertent misinterpretation of a communication initiated by them, these students may be excoritated by someone else.

It seems quite evident that if we do not promote the total communication process (speech as well as writing) in our English classrooms, we are withholding a vital vehicle for human expression from our young. They must be made to realize that effective speech and writing are necessarily bound to one another and are the means through which one expresses effective thought. Speech and writing can be agonizing tasks for many, but they are necessary for survival; and the students must realize that "If we offend, it is with our good will."[3]

NOTES

1. "Teaching Thinking on Paper," Time, 109 (April 18, 1977), p. 74.
2. William Shakespeare, A Midsummer Night's Dream, V, i, 118-21.
3. A Midsummer Night's Dream, V, i, 114.

MY AGENT WOULD NEVER ACCEPT THIS

Mary Barkan, Cashman Junior High, Las Vegas, Nevada

Drama in any classroom can be a valuable teaching tool. It can provide a variety in teaching procedures, a method for presenting opposing points of view, and a general way to improve student self-concepts. In the English classroom Drama can be used to present valuable but dry material to students.

My junior high school students wanted to act. After all acting was fun and it would relieve us of English for two weeks. We began by reading/acting commercials. We discussed enthusiasm, diction, gestures, eye contact and the use of print material by actors. All went well. We enjoyed watching the commercials, laughed a great deal, and had a good time.

We began having "English" problems during the next assignment. Students wrote commercials for each other. Authors did not share commercials with potential actors before the dramatization began: the acting was to be spontaneous, unrehearsed and brilliant. As the commercials were written they were placed in boxes in the front of the room. During the performance time students selected a commercial, looked at it for a minute or two and then performed it for the class. Students did not have time for extensive rehearsal and they were not allowed to ask questions of the author.

Things began to fall apart. Complaints, arguments, pouting, and tantrums followed. The class began to hear things like:

> "How am I supposed to breathe? This doesn't have any periods!"
>
> "If you wanted me to hold up the package you should have put that in parentheses. I thought I was supposed to read it out loud."
>
> "Your handwriting is trash."
>
> "How am I supposed to make these four lines last a minute? I can't read in slow motion."
>
> "None of this makes any sense."
>
> "You just stuck that in there. It isn't a sentence."
>
> "If I'm supposed to sop after 'hello' you're supposed to put a period there."

No one had really written a concise, clearly punctuated script. I had deliberately not mentioned writing mechanics when I gave the assignment. I assumed that students would discover the importance of clear writing on their own. They did.

A calm discussion of problems led to the general agreement that in order to be a star you had to have talented writers who knew something about sentences and punctuation.

We did the assignment again. This time the acting was probably at the same level but the writing had clearly improved. When students realized that someone was depending on them to write clearly they saw the need to do so. It was certainly more exciting than our grammar book.

We took the project one step further and wrote commercials for two or more people. Here we explored the mysteries of quotation marks, commas, and dramatic timing. Later we examined the format of the one act play. Students noticed that here quotation marks are rarely used but all other punctuation remains important.

During the rest of the term, when I mentioned mechanics, students were inclined to listen because they had a practical reference point. When they traded paragraphs or themes to read aloud a student would always say, "Oh, come on, you know you have to use end marks. Don't you remember the commercials?"

PROJECT ROOTS: ORAL LEGENDS IN THE CLASSROOM

Dianne M. Cripe, Corona del Sol High School, Tempe

Familiarity breeds confidence--at least confidence in speaking before the class. While gun control, abortion and other controversial issues provide timely topics, students often are not personally involved with them. This results in uneasiness when they speak before an audience.

With the appearance of Roots last year, many students found a topic they could readily identify with--their heritage. Due to the personal nature of this topic, many students gained confidence in speaking before large groups while using it.

First the students conduct a bit of research regarding their individual family histories. How far back they can trace their roots is not important. Instead, emphasis is placed on what interesting legends or stories they could uncover. To do this, the students interview several relatives carefully, taking notes so that exact phrases can be copied down. Since many students have moved here from other parts of the country, letter writing became part of the assignment. Some of the questions to ask include:

1. What country did the family come from and why?
2. How did they arrive here? Where and how did they get settled?
3. Were there any famous (or infamous) characters in the family's past?
4. What did the family do during this country's wars and the Great Depression?
5. Does your family have a hometown? Where is it and what is it like?
6. What were the means of entertainment for your grandparents and great-grandparents?
7. Compare food and housing for the past two generations of your family.

After compiling this information, students usually present an account of one interesting relative. One student discovered his great-aunt was screen star Jean Harlow. Another was surprised to learn that her great-grandfather was a past president of Mexico.

Not all students can provide the class with interesting anecdotes. Some have no desire to rattle the family skeleton. For these students an alternate project, such as a careers paper, should be provided. This way they are still researching a topic tailored especially for them.

For those who would like to research their roots, the following sources have been recommended by Time magazine.

1. The National Archives in Washington, D.C.--for census records, military records, ships' passenger lists and naturalization records.
2. The Latter-Day Saints Library in Salt Lake City--the world's largest geneology library containing government census records.
3. The Library of Congress Annex in Washington, D.C.--30,000 volumes arranged by family name. Information is related to early American settlers.
4. The New York Public Library--volumes include scrapbooks and photographs of American towns.
5. The Newberry Library of Chicago and the Fort Wayne, Indiana Public Library--records concentrating on the Midwest.
6. The Free Library of Philadelphia--Colonial archives and volumes of early Pennsylvania settlers.
7. The National Archives branch in Fort Worth, Texas--one of the largest collections of American Indian genealogical material.
8. The Yivo Institute in New York--the best U.S. source for material on Eastern European Jews.
9. The Researcher's Guide to American Genealogy by Val Greenwood. Genealogical Publishing Co. A comprehensive textbook including the types of records and resources that can be found in America.
10. Searching for Your Ancestors by Gilbert Doane. University of Minnesota Press. A general reference book.
11. Genealogical Research: Volumes I and II. American Society of Genealogists. An overview of each state's records.
12. Finding Your Roots by Jeane Westin. Tracing roots here and abroad.

TEACHING SPEECH SKILLS TO NINTH GRADERS

Daniel L. Hatch, Mingus Union High School, Cottonwood

In the Spring, 1977 semester, I was pleased to have a student teacher, Dennis Farrell, who was a speech major. He lacked an English background, but he was so enthusiastic that I didn't worry. We decided that together we would do something better.

Our subjects were ninth graders, many of whom had never stood before a group of their peers and mumbled more than their names. To involve our students in active and organized speech, we designed a brief unit that involved and related library research skills, parliamentary procedure, and informative and persuasive speeches.

First, we told our students that they were all members of a governing and legislative body similar to Congress. Their purpose was to make life better for the people who had elected them.

Second, in order to initiate legislation for the improvement of life, they must research contemporary social problems. They all chose their own topics, and some students banded together into committees to gather more research in the library in a shorter time. Two groups discovered they were researching the same topic, but each had a different motive. This provided a need for a smattering of debating techniques supplied by the student teacher.

Student topics included: abortion; gun control; import/export tariffs and laws; drug laws; students' rights; the legal drinking, driving, and voting ages; and the possibility of lower auto insurance premiums for honor roll students.

One student felt that the topics had been used too often and were cliche. However, those same topics are still not completely settled although our students offered some quite practical and logical plans for action. We convinced our student to study parliamentary procedure instead of involving himself in a topic choice. He agreed and became the class parliamentarian.

Our third order of business was to open the grand assembly for legislative proposals. As teachers, we took turns acting as chairman of the assembly.

Student response was quite pleasing since they were encouraged to research topics that were relevant to them, both as students and citizens. We emphasized the importance of each student's role as a future participant in local, state, and national political issues. This stimulated the reading of newspapers and news magazines, and we managed to prompt more interest in the social studies classes.

ABC'S OF RHETORICAL VICES OF STUDENT SPEAKERS

Marie J. Wittek, York College of the City University of New York

The purpose of this paper is to consider the student faults of ambiguity of terms, lack of analysis, excessive use of barbarism, and poor use of the climax in high school speeches. The writer was a teacher of Speech and Chairman of a high school Speech Department who listened and graded student speeches for ten years. The concluding questions are based on personal teaching experiences, observations of new and experienced speech teachers and reading in the Speech discipline.

While I was slowly poring over student content evaluation sheets in the basic high school course in Public Speaking, it quickly became apparent to me, that the above vices were foremost in number and variety. Ambiguity is defined as obscurity or vagueness created by the use of equivocal, inexact or little understood words or propositions and organization of materials for the speech. The student who fails to delve into the material will express himself poorly. The need for careful scholarship is not heeded. The inexact word is the shield of his ignorance. Vagueness is the citadel of the weak scholar. The teacher must react directly to counter the effects on both the speaker and the audience. Acceptance will not make it so. One technique is to have the students question the speaker about his speech. Perhaps this will force recognition of this fault by the speaker.

Analysis is defined as the process by which the discussable aspects of a subject, the central idea, the main headings--are discovered and revealed. Analysis of a subject involves discovering what, of all that is possible to say about the subject, should be said to a specific audience on a specific occasion. We have all met the anxious student who gathers reams of materials, books, periodicals, newspapers but has not a clue what to do. The central idea of the topic is missed--and the audience listens to a long painful recitation of rambling remembrances.

Or, take the student who can make a creditable analysis of the material but fails to relate it to the specific audience. Analysis does not come easily. Agreed, the best technique to encourage and enforce careful thought is the outline. Time spent in outlining is your investment in the future of the student speaker. Mandate the use of an outline for all speeches presented. When grading the outline--be ruthless! Have students outline one another's speeches. Ask them to assign grades from 1-5 for all student speeches. Give reinforced training through outlining famous speeches. Poor outlines breed poor speeches.

Barbarism is defined as a nonstandard word such as "disremember" or "irregardless" that has been irregularly formed. Barbarisms often becloud meaning, distract attention, and impair the speaker's ethos. They should be avoided. Indeed they should be but they are not. Bright students believe that barbarism can be used with impunity. They suspect that they are not "with it," not part of the "now" generation, unless their speeches are loaded down with such expressions. Less bright students simply fail to realize the poor impression that they give remains with their audience. Choice of effective language is one of the

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basic requests of the good public speaker. Yet it is too often neglected, or given scant attention in texts or classes. A sense of urgency for excellence in language should replace acceptance of the mundane. Wide, in depth, directed reading is one of the first orders of business. Literacy skills for appreciation of language and style should be taught in Speech class. Directed readings of the best speeches in our literature should be assigned. Reports on these readings should be evaluated in class. Clarity, correctness and exactness are the goals of the student speakers.

Climax is defined as a culmination or high point. In rhetoric the term refers to the point in a discourse at which the greatest force is achieved. There is no set place for climax in a particular speech. This fault at times is not seriously challenged by the Speech teacher. The climax heightens the dramatic effect of the speech. Ignorance of this knowledge leads to flattened speechmaking. In outlining the student should be alert to the natural place in his speech for the climax. Significance of this point will be discovered by the teacher. Critical listening skills of the class should be sharpened to test each speech for this element. References to dramatic literature should be made by the teacher. Plays should be mentioned or assigned which have excellent examples of conflict--climax. If time is a problem, assign a scene reading to show how the climax lends coherence, clarity and dramatic force to the speech. It tightens thinking and expands understanding.

Do the faults lie in the stars or in the general lack of precision in modern thought and speech? Have we as speech teachers encouraged this lack of analytic thought and deliberate speech? Perhaps so. Are we skillful in presenting positive and real reasons for careful reasoning and stylistic speech?

Do we spend the necessary time on rhetorical analysis of the classic speeches in our discipline? I suspect not. Do we reject sloppy thinking and inadequate expression with severity? Perhaps we give tacit encouragement to the pursuit of mediocrity. Lastly, are we the models we could and should be to our students?

AND HOWLET'S LEG OR OUR MACBETH PRODUCTION

Donald B. Veix, Rider College, Lawrenceville, New Jersey

I had just returned to my English department from a doctoral sabbatical leave. Like all English teachers caught up in graduate work I dreamed of one quiet year puttering about with books and kids while I wrote my dissertation.

Instead, it became a memorable year. My own inability to follow my wife's practical advice and do one thing at a time (she teaches mathematics) resulted in a dissertation mistake that almost cost me my degree. Almost.

Early in September I met the other junior English teachers as chairman of the 11th grade curriculum committee. A state evaluation was coming. Perhaps we were fleeing the evaluation but in any case we decided to do Macbeth and do it differently. We planned to have the entire junior class experience one or two weeks of Shakespeare. I forget who suggested the approach. Most important we were ready for it. Our original date for completion was early January but it wasn't until early March that our first week began.

Eldorado: A group of English teachers ready to do something, anything, to recapture the promise that had led them to English teaching. Howlet's leg. On to Birnam. By March we had discovered each other's strengths and weaknesses, were caught up in a maelstrom of activity. ideas and cooperative effort, were subjected to the passive resistance of the administration and saw a decorated toilet bowl carried ceremoniously past hundreds of parents and teachers. (The following English teachers should not stop reading: (a) those who ignore Shakespeare because kids hate him, (b) those who refuse to modify his sacred words.)

Our early meetings revealed that no one beside myself had tried cooperative teaching before. Both Nancy and Pat were second year teachers while Diane and I had each taught for about ten years, Diane, for a time in Egypt. There were never any personality conflicts. I was convinced from the beginning that it was the finest thing I had ever been involved with in teaching English. We decided early that we would start with a Shakespeare's week in which each of us would lecture on one aspect of Shakespeare's world we felt comfortable in, that we would culminate our week with a production in which each of our classes would interpret Macbeth. In the lectures Pat would do Elizabethan music; Diane, witchcraft; Nancy since she still had contacts with her college drama professor, costumes; and myself, 16th century London. We would each lecture to as many of each other's 11th grade classes as we could. The one thing that emerged from these meetings beside our ideas was fearfulness, fear of the unknown. It hadn't been done before, no one knew whether the kids would produce, whether anything would happen at all, other than a disaster. The disaster seemed most likely.

We suffered from a superfluity of ideas which tapped on egg shells but remained shadows: Elizabethan food researched in home economics and served in the cafeteria, strolling minstrels in the halls of our English floor, two editions of a Shakespearian newspaper, having students teach classes, using non-Shakespearian mood music (Bartok), having graphic arts make covers for our

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newspapers, securing a commercial film on one of Shakespeare's plays, library display cases on Shakespeare's world, a film of witch-puppets, having the music department produce Elizabethan choral and instrumental music, guest university speakers. We were Puck's fools. The production of adapted scenes from Macbeth plus preparing our own lectures was all we ever accomplished. We had forgotten that we saw these kids only 45 minutes a day four days a week, that there weren't enough copies of Macbeth for everyone to use at the same time, that not all of the kids desired to be part of the activities. Thus we had to teach the normal material and work on our production too.

When one of the witch puppets' fathers was transferred out of the state, the remaining filmmakers put their cameras away and took up the howlet's leg. In the meantime, Nancy had decided to do something fascinating on medieval jesters and three of her students were practicing in motley. This was the only one of our activities that seemed to be on schedule (if the costumes arrived).

The four plays of my classes had all been tied together somehow. One group of three girls volunteered to be witches. Their appearances in each scene would provide a unifying thread and like Ben Jonson's commentators they would talk to the audience but remain unheard and unseen by the actors. Unfortunately they had firm ideas about witches' attire. They produced the usual peaked hats and black robes. At my suggestion they added beards. I regretted this. Bearded witches were in the play, but on our stage resembed sisters in a sideshow. The fact that the witches had a falling out because of the tensions and refused to speak to one another didn't help the production's last moments.

All of the groups were given the freedom to rewrite Macbeth and put it in a new setting. One group decided to produce the death of Lady Macduff as a western in pantomime. Earlier we had considered rewriting the scene as a modern murder in a New York apartment. I don't think the kids were really aware of the work involved. Jean wrote later, "First of all you have to understand what this scene is all about and what the lines symbolize." The ballad of Jesse James was to introduce and close the scene and the rewritten Western dialogue was projected on a lowered screen behind the pantomimists dressed in Western clothes. The problem of authentic dialogue was never solved. We needed time to analyze the nuances of Western speech. But if their lines were short and hesitant, the lines were their own attempt to translate Shakespeare's and their "I'll be a goin' now" appeared next to Shakespeare's "Oh like a bird." I suggested that overhead transparencies could be made using the educables' large print typewriter. A previous department chairman had suggested this long before. My role as a teacher was changing; my function now seemed to be to know where a certain typewriter was, anticipating problems with other teachers, feeding the kids ideas, and pulling and pushing them. The actors complained that they could not synchronize their pantomime if the dialogue was projected behind them. We added a prompter, and soon ran out of bodies after adding kids for the lights, the curtain and the overhead projector. I was volunteered for the phonograph. Sometime after "I'll go saddle up the horses" and "Run, Ma, run!" I played the ballad of "Jesse James." After the murder two students in the audience spoke lines we had agreed were apropos, "Did heaven look on and would not take their part . . ." and "They should have died hereafter . . ."

Jean, one of the actresses, later wrote, "How to keep the audience interested in what you are doing involves much movement on stage . . . . Even though there were problems to putting on this scene, it was both challenging and enjoyable."

The "lesson plans" for these scenes were filled with sketches, arrows, notes, all superimposed on typed dialogue. The kids and I criticized our common plans in class. There was never a finished script. We had decided to do Macbeth before March, ready or not. The press of time that Banquo felt infected us all. Reactions of the kids to the ideas I threw them showed many of them to be quite traditional in their attitudes toward literature. The following ideas were rejected by the groups: actors dressed as animals, distorted sound (tapes played at slower speeds), gauze swept across the screen using hidden fishing poles, frames on the actor's shoulders to distort their shapes, movies of one or two sentences photographed in different letter-color combinations, the use of flashlights at varying distances behind a white curtain, the frequent use of projected impressionistic sketches (of crows for example), the use of sticks with rags and skulls to represent the witches.

One group did the death of Banquo. They proceeded down a darkened aisle toward the stage with lighted candles. Only later did I learn that the mysterious drafts that affected the flames originated in the audience, nature's very own wind. One of the most complicated aspects of these scenes was the combining of dialogue written by our class and dialogue from Shakespeare's and other writers' works. When we added the dialogue of two actors sitting in the audience to that of Banquo and Fleance walking down the dark aisle, real problems of timing arose. John had found verses in Poe's "Raven" that he considered apropos. The lines "Oh distinctly I remember . . ., Deep into that darkness peering . . .," and "The silken sad uncertain rustling of each purple curtain . . . .," sounded right both in the context of the scene and as something the boy Fleance might say. Combinations like Macduff saying "Hurry or we'll be late" and the audience's comment, "They are assailable," made this scene interesting. The atmosphere was added to by the projection of our homemade transparency of a rooky wood and the playing of a tape of raucous crows. The dangerous element involved the murderers' use of an assortment of kitchen cutlery that could have taken a Spanish galleon. Adolescents are drawn by violence. In the darkness I heard the clatter of real knives, the thud of bodies, and I mentally began to update my reference file. The lights revealed the witches alone, a spinning French knife on the stage, and no blood. There is something about this scene that always results in near misses when kids do it. A few years before when my eighth graders did it, I saw Fleance trip while leaping off stage and whirl past my ear upside down. No blood there either. The audience accepted it as part of our act both times.

The Banquo scene like the others was an amalgam of my suggestions, the students' suggestions, time, and a working out of the drama. Some of my ideas were unworkable. Some of the students' suggestions, like John's of "The Raven" lines, were superior. John incidentally was the class isolate. Invariably irritating in his comments and unpredictable behavior he still came up with a novel idea, the use of Poe with Shakespeare. Simple but not so simple. And no one else had thought of it. The scene finally ended with lines from the audience, Henry VIII's "Oh how wretched is that poor man that hangs on prince's favors," plus simultaneously large projected slides of a mummy's face, Tut's golden mask and a page from the Book of the Dead. An effective device was the use of the lens of the projector to bring the slides both in and out of focus. The same technique using the volume knob of the record player resulted in more pleasing transitions of sound and vision.

The most difficult scene for any of my groups was the death of a king. We had made it much too complicated. I guess the kids knew this but humored me as they often did. "The old guy's too hung up on this. Go along with it."

My ideas were rooted in my own more extensive reading of Shakespeare and other authors. I had spent the Christmas vacation scanning piles of old magazines for pictures and reading Shakespeare's plays about kings. Although a synopsis helped with the latter, there was no substitute for the close reading necessary to locate lines that would apply to the theme, the death of kings. The slides that I received back from Kodak were previewed by the kids who were to do the production. They decided to show 12 of the slides.

The omnipresent spotlighted witches opened the scene with "All hail" and another play's "The breath of wordly men cannot depose the deputy elected by the Lord . . . ., If angels fight weak men must fall for heaven still guards the right." Lights out. Click. The darkness was broken by the shriek of jet engines and a large color slide of the presidential jet dipping its nose toward a city below. The intentional use of focusing and unfocusing the projector created this illusion. The students' script read "The main theme is death by assassination. The crime that Macbeth and his fellow conspirators committed (that of regicide) is adapted to modern day circumstances. The plot is to 'kill the president.'" The play: as our two "senators" walk down the aisle toward the stage, two slides of imperial Roman faces are alternately projected several times on the screen. The senators discuss the killing of the "king" as they walk. "How much does he want?" "$50,000 (Oswald's face appears on the screen) and passport and papers." Confusion now began to make his masterpiece for the harried backup boys and girls of the production. I would only be aware later after reading compositions like "How I Blew the Slides" what had happened. Bob later wrote, "On that fateful morn like so many great men before me have fallen, I fell. Instead of flashing the face of Oswald the face of Martin Luther King appeared." "Senator" John walking down the aisle wrote, "One of my main worries was someone sticking their foot out into the dark gloomy aisle as Will and I walked down. What really got me was when the picture of Oswald did not appear on the screen when I gave my cue line." The dignitaries on stage included the witches as observers. When the music "Hail to the Chief" finished, a speaker at a rostrum decorated with the presidential seal said, "I now give you the President of the United States." Unfortunately, the President was Ralph, well known to the other students ("My clever disguise was recognized"), and they cheered. My own opinion of the production at this point was unprintable, but the mood of the audience changed. As a slide of Martin Luther King was projected, an assassin appeared in the wings and fired two shots. The President fell, the lights went out and the audience made one loud spontaneous noise that sounded like a laugh, but was as close to a cry as adolescents can make. It all rushed back upon us, the moment just a few years ago. Ralph later wrote, "The mood changed from laughter to one of seriousness." Slides of the assassination, of two mourners, and Lincoln followed accompanied by lines from "When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloomed." The slides of the funeral procession of the President was followed by the jet rising now, the engines softer, and lights. Perhaps the wounds of national tragedy were still unhealed. "Senator" John wrote "As I saw the pictures of Kennedy and King, I felt something deep down as if I was really there." Of course there was always the inevitable humorous aspect of adolescent productions. Darkness separated our stage crew with no means of communication. Oswald's gun misfired, "although I was a pretty good Lee," and high above our heads the lighting crew, precariously perched, waited for a third shot that never came. The lights stayed on, President Ralph gave up and staggered off stage. "Fumble-fingered Bob dropped the slide of J. F. K. being shot," Jay wrote, "Backstage in a play such as Macbeth is one of the most hectic experiences one can have." The witches rushing to their hearth refused to speak to anyone. "While going across the stage to the lights, I met a witch," Kevin wrote. "Witch, where do you want the lights? 'Go ask one of the other witches,' she said. 'Forget about the witches' I said to myself as I climbed to the top of the ceiling."

The compositions, the natural outgrowth of my classes' efforts, were read to them some time later and I explained why the writing was better than their previous efforts. In the case of one artist, Bill, it was his best effort of the year. He described his activities in making a bush, coats of arms for the walls of the auditorium, and a presidential seal. The latter presented problems. "I went to the nurse's office, both main offices, guidance and the library. It took four days to find one in an old issue of Life . . . It took two days to complete . . . After all the work I don't think the audience saw it because the podium was turned the wrong way." In June some of the actors chose to write about their experiences as a final exam question.

A group from my "hoody" class, insulted that they were not participating, had volunteered to do a scene. It was the first time that they had volunteered to do anything. They were beginning to display the initiative and imagination in school that they regularly displayed outside it. Their silhouetted murder of Lady Macduff was made more shocking when someone squirted catsup on the sheet and the contrasted red worked its way down the bright backlighted white cloth.

What of Pat, Nancy and Diane? Pat's banquet scene was quite well done. A Macbeth with courage had been found, he memorized his lines, and Banquo's ghost was believable. Her production was remarkable for several reasons: the students were non-college bound, and one scene was acted by kids from several different classes.

Diane revealed herself as a woman of great calm and powers of organization in a crisis. Although I had had many ideas in the initial planning, I characteristically fell apart at the sight of all those kids, and all those thoses. Diane took charge and like Jehova brought order from chaos sending an army of Macbeths in one direction, a group of Macduffs in another. Her students' production was marvelous. The girl who interpreted the sleep walking scene in modern dance was superior.

Nancy's two productions were great. A jester attired in bright jagged colors finished his routine by tumbling head over heels off the stage (the front row got their money's worth that day) after a professional performance. Two slide projectors and a tape recorder worked perfectly to synchronize the music of Simon and Garfunkel and pictures of Nancy's 20-foot collage on Macbeth. The blending of slides as the music changed worked flawlessly and was one of the finest things I've seen in English teaching.

We were never ready to go on stage. The day and night of the dress rehearsal was frantic. After teaching all day Nancy and I drove 20 miles to the county a. v. lab to pick up her materials. A. v. said they couldn't spare someone to run the projectors so I commenced crude drawings with arrows, "Push button C until red light goes on," etc. Nancy looking over my shoulder decided we couldn't do it and after some shouting persuaded a. v. to loan us someone for the production the next morning. By 6:00 p.m. the school looked like a carnival had taken over: cackling witches, Lady Macbeth in leotards, endless Macbeths and Macduffs, props in motion, utter confusion. The inevitable students who said one's name three times loudly before asking their question didn't help. Many of the acts never went onstage. At 2:00 a.m. I fell into a chasm of sleep. Tomorrow at 8, Macbeth. Through all the extraneous madness our excitement remained high; we were marvelously trapped by our plans to produce Macbeth. The kids, normally indifferent, were caught up in our enthusiasm. They couldn't believe we were working so hard. Getting close to see better they were sucked in too. The rest of the world shrank as our colossus grew.

For the four of us Pat, Nancy, Diane and myself, it was forever after "Our (The) Macbeth Production." It was the best thing we did that year and maybe since. It was my last year at that high school. What of the kids? Well we had a rapport with the juniors that year that was superb. Study halls were friendly, classes relaxed. We were the kooks who had led them from Birnam to Dunsinane and Camelot.

Perhaps the kids said it best in their compositions, "Producing a play meant not only more fun, but also a chance to experiment and try new ideas . . . The production also gave me many memories both good and bad, fun and frightening" (final exam three months later--Mary Jo).

"When a person is acting out what he feels, he is being realistic and not acting like someone else interpreted the scene" (Roy J.). As for the howlet, Roy wrote, "If the witches had truly been making the broth they would have blown up the entire auditorium. In the quotation from IV, I, 'Adders fork and blind worm's sting, Lizard's leg and howlet's wing,' a howlet's leg was added by mistake. Poof!"